SEPT. 16

10¢

TWO COMPLETE NOVELETS • RICHARD BLAKER • ROBERT CARSE

ARGOSY

RED STAR MAGAZINE 9-16

WEEKLY

In Flanders' Field, the Battle Has Not Died . . .

Beginning **REMEMBER TOMORROW**

By Theodore Roscoe

PRODUCED BY LINZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ride 'em, Cowboy!

Here is the chance for all ***Western story fans*** to ride herd on some of the best "***classics of the range***" ever written. ***They're the very stories you've wanted to read.*** Every one of them is an exciting, red-blooded, rip-roaring yarn of colorful adventure, romance, and action when the West was young! We have corralled them into one magazine ***for your enjoyment.***

The author's names will give you a hint of the treat in store for you! . . . . ***Just look at them ! ! !***

ZANE GREY . . . MAX BRAND . . . KENNETH PERKINS . . . EUGENE CUNNINGHAM . . . EARL WAYLAND BOWMAN . . . FRANK RICHARDSON PIERCE . . . EARL C. McCAIN.

If you're starved for adventure—if you long for romance—if you want action . . . action aplenty—

hurry to any good newsstand and buy a copy of

Crack-Shot WESTERN

Famous Thrillers Selected by the Editors of the Munsey Publications

NOW ON SALE 15c

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED.

1937
1938
1939
1940

Now is the time!

Business is Searching for YOU, if . . . .

RIGHT now, in many lines, there is a search for really *good* men—managers, leaders—men who can take charge of departments, businesses, branch offices, and get things humming.

As always, there are not enough ordinary jobs to go 'round—but rarely before, in the history of American business, has there been so much room at the *top!* And new jobs are being created by the business pick-up in many lines—jobs that pay splendidly and that open the way to lifetime success.

Ordinarily, there would be plenty of men to fill these jobs—men in junior positions who had been studying in spare time. But most men have been letting their training slide during these dark years of depression . . . "What's the use?"—You have heard them say. Perhaps there has been some excuse for sticking to any old kind of a job one could get the past few years—but the door is wide open for the man with ambition and ability *NOW!*

And don't let anyone tell you that "Opportunity Only Knocks Once"—that's one of the most untruthful sayings ever circulated. Opportunities flourish for *every* American every day of his life.

Far more to the point is to be ready—to be *prepared*—to make yourself *interesting* to the big-time employer—and LaSalle offers you a short-cut method of qualifying for opportunity jobs in accounting, law, traffic, executive management, and kindred occupations.

LaSalle Extension is 30 years old—averages over 30,000 enrollments a year—60 American firms each employ 500 or more LaSalle-trained men—surveys show that many LaSalle students attain 40% salary increase after graduation—10% of all C.P.A.'s in the U.S.A. are LaSalle-alumni.

Why not find out what LaSalle has done and is doing for men in *your* position? Send and get the facts; see what LaSalle can do for you, personally!

There's no question about it—business is picking up—jobs are looking for *men*—the time has come for you to *qualify* for prosperity. Mail this coupon today!

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY
A CORRESPONDENCE INSTITUTION
4101 S. Michigan Ave., Dept. 958-R Chicago

I am in earnest about my success and I would like to have your special booklet—without any cost or obligation to me—about my opportunities and your success training in the business field I have checked:

- ☐ Business Management
- ☐ Higher Accountancy
- ☐ Traffic Management
- ☐ Modern Salesmanship
- ☐ Commercial Law
- ☐ Law—Degree of LL.B.
- ☐ Expert Bookkeeping
- ☐ Industrial Management
- ☐ Modern Foremanship
- ☐ Business Correspondence
- ☐ Business English
- ☐ Effective Speaking
- ☐ C. P. A. Coaching
- ☐ Stenotypy

*Name*_____ *Age*_____

*Position*_____ *Address*_____

Ask for one of these booklets—or a similar one on your own field of business. They are free!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ARGOSY

America's Oldest and Best All-Fiction Magazine

Volume 293 CONTENTS FOR SEPTEMBER 16, 1939 Number 3

Remember Tomorrow—*First of six parts*.....Theodore Roscoe 6
By the still of night they march and slay—the undead legion whose bones lie sleeping under the poppies of the Silent Land

Senior Sleight-of-Hand—*Complete Novelet*.....Richard Blaker 30
The politicos, they fly high in Paraguaso—but a shrewd adventurer with nothing up his sleeve may bring them down with a demonstration of Scottish legerdemain

Nightingale at Second—*Short Story*.....John Wiggin 45
A little mountain music scored for nine players—then somebody lost the notes before game time

Men of Daring—*True Story in Pictures*.....Stookie Allen 56
Grey & Howell—Deep Sea Champions

Puritan's Progress—*Complete Novelet*.....Robert Carse 58
They fled from Salem's witch-hunts to Spanish tyranny in the Caribbean—yet they wielded their blades for liberty and, as free men, stood fast

River Rogues—*Fourth of five parts*.Fred MacIsaac & C. W. Harkins 75
Two barrels of buckshot keep the Puddle Duck *from changing hands*

Legends of the Legionaries—*Picture Feature*.....W. A. Windas 91
Lexicon of the Fighting Men

Storm Over Claybank—*Short Story*.....Philip Ketchum 92
When the range runs dry, cattlemen's tempers—and trigger fingers—itch

Dutch Courage—*Short Story*.....George Masselman 100
If the Kuris are gathering skulls, don't risk your head over a theory unless you're sure of both

Hurricane Range—*Conclusion*.....Luke Short 110
Comes the cyclone and a scoundrel's house of cards may fall

Judgment Deferred .....Dr. Charles Ticknor Tolson 90
Argonotes 127
Looking Ahead! 128

Cover by Rudolph Belarski
Illustrating Remember Tomorrow

This magazine is on sale every Wednesday

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, Publisher, 280 Broadway, NEW YORK, N. Y.
WILLIAM T. DEWART President

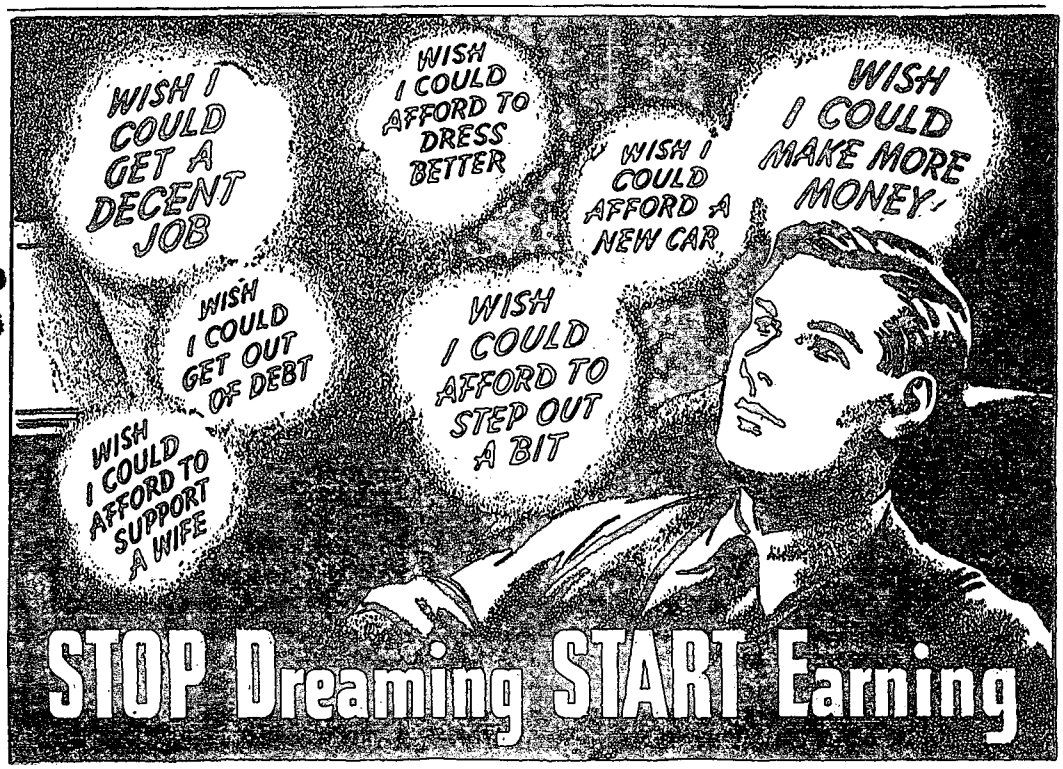
THE CONTINENTAL PUBLISHERS & DISTRIBUTORS, LTD. 3 La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C., 4

PARIS: HACHETTE & CIE 111 Rue Réaumur

Published weekly and copyright, 1939, by The Frank A. Munsey Company. Single copies 10 cents. By the year $4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; Canada, $5.00; Other countries, $7.00. Currency should not be sent unless registered. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Entered as second class matter November 28, 1896, at the post office, New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. The entire contents of this magazine are protected by copyright and must not be reprinted without the publisher's permission. Title registered in U. S. Patent Office. Copyrighted in Great Britain. Printed in U. S. A.

Manuscripts submitted to this magazine should be accompanied by sufficient postage for their return if found unavailable. The publisher can accept no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED


WISH I COULD GET A DECENT JOB
WISH I COULD AFFORD TO DRESS BETTER
WISH I COULD AFFORD A NEW CAR
WISH I COULD MAKE MORE MONEY!
WISH I COULD GET OUT OF DEBT
WISH I COULD AFFORD TO STEP OUT A BIT
WISH I COULD AFFORD TO SUPPORT A WIFE
STOP Dreaming START Earning

Learn to Make $30, $50, $75 a Week

I will train you at home for good spare time and full time JOBS IN RADIO

J. E. SMITH,
President,
National Radio Institute
Established 25 years.

Many Radio Experts Make $30, $50, $75 a Week

RADIO broadcasting stations employ engineers, operators, station managers and pay well for trained men. Fixing Radio sets in spare time pays many $200 to $500 a year—full time jobs with Radio jobbers, manufacturers and dealers as much as $30, $50, $75 a week. Many Radio Experts open full or part time Radio sales and repair businesses. Radio manufacturers and jobbers employ testers, inspectors, foremen, engineers, servicemen in good-pay jobs with opportunities for advancement. Automobile, police, aviation, commercial Radio, loudspeaker systems are newer fields offering good opportunities now and for the future. Television promises to open many good jobs soon. Men I trained have good jobs in these branches of Radio. Read how they got their jobs. Mail coupon.

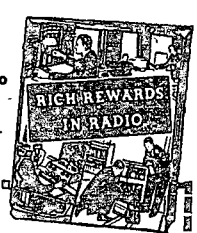
Many Make $5, $10, $15 a Week Extra in Spare Time While Learning

The day you enroll I start sending Extra Money Job Sheets; show you how to do Radio repair jobs. Throughout your training I send plans and directions that made good spare time money—$200 to $500—for hundreds, while learning. I send you special Radio equipment to conduct experiments and build circuits. This 50-50 method of training makes learning at home interesting, fascinating, practical. I ALSO GIVE YOU A MODERN, PROFESSIONAL ALL-WAVE, ALL PURPOSE RADIO SET SERVICING INSTRUMENT to help you make good money fixing Radios while learning and equip you for full time jobs after graduation.

Find Out What Radio Offers You

Act Today. Mail the coupon now for "Rich Rewards in Radio." It points out Radio's spare time and full time opportunities and those coming in Television; tells about my training in Radio and Television; shows you letters from men I trained, telling what they are doing and earning. Find out what Radio offers YOU! MAIL COUPON in an envelope, or paste on a postcard—NOW!

J. E. SMITH,
President
National Radio Institute,
Dept. 9JK
Washington, D. C.



J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute, Dept. 9JK
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Smith: Without obligating me, send "Rich Rewards in Radio," which points out spare time and full time opportunities in Radio explaining your 50-50 method of training men at home in spare time to become Radio Experts. (Please write plainly.)

Name.....Age.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

U. S. GOVERNMENT JOBS!

START

$1260 to $2100 a Year

Get Ready Immediately.

Men—Women

Grade School Education usually Sufficient.

Mail Coupon today sure.

COUPON

FRANKLIN INSTITUTE, Dept. N247, Rochester, N. Y.

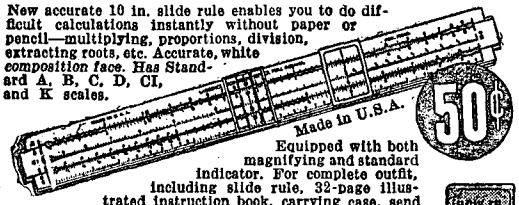
Sirs: Rush to me without charge (1) 32-page book with list of U. S. Government jobs, salaries, duties, ages, etc. (2) Tell me how to qualify for one of these jobs.

Name.....

Address.....

You Can Figure INSTANTLY On This NEW SLIDE RULE

New accurate 10 in. slide rule enables you to do difficult calculations instantly without paper or pencil—multiplying, proportions, division, extracting roots, etc. Accurate, white *composition face.* Has Standard A, B, C, D, CI, and K scales.



Equipped with both magnifying and standard indicator. For complete outfit, including slide rule, 32-page illustrated instruction book, carrying case, send 50c in coins or U. S. stamps (60c in Canada). Mailed postpaid. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded. (Schools and dealers; write for quantity price.) Send today for this great slide rule value.

Made to use the Slide Rule

LAWRENCE ENGINEERING SERVICE, 97 Smith St., PERU, INDIANA

GUARANTEED TIRES!

GOODYEAR GOODRICH FIRESTONE U.S. and Other Standard Makes

World's Lowest TIRE PRICES

Tire users by the thousands all over the U.S.A. vouch for the *Long Hard Service* of our Standard Brand tires reconditioned with high grade materials and latest methods by our tire experts. Our 21 years experience makes it possible to offer tires at lowest prices, with legal agreement to replace at ½ price any tire that fails to give 12 Mos. Service.

FREE! LANTERN With Every 2 Tires ordered

Complete with batteries and newest type reflector bulb. Ready for instant use. Strong, steady light. Useful everywhere. Order now.

EVERY TIRE GUARANTEED!

BALLOON TIRES

Size Rim	Tires	Tubes
29x4.40-21	$2.15	$1.05
29x4.50-20	2.35	1.06
30x4.50-21	2.40	1.15
28x4.75-19	2.45	1.25
29x4.75-20	2.50	1.26
29x5.00-19	2.85	1.25
30x5.00-20	2.85	1.28
6.25-17	2.90	1.30
28x5.25-18	2.90	1.35
29x5.25-19	2.95	1.35
30x5.25-20	2.95	1.35
31x5.25-21	3.25	1.35
6.50-17	3.35	1.40
28x5.50-19	3.35	1.40
29x5.50-19	3.35	1.45
6.00-17	3.40	1.40
30x6.00-18	3.40	1.40
31x6.00-19	3.40	1.45
32x6.00-20	3.45	1.55
33x6.00-21	3.65	1.55
32x6.50-20	3.75	1.75
6.00-16	3.75	1.45

REGULAR CORD TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes
30x3½	$2.35	$0.95
31x4	2.35	1.25
32x4	2.95	1.25
33x4	2.95	1.25
34x4	3.25	1.35
32x4½	3.35	1.45

HEAVY DUTY TRUCK TIRES

(High Pressure)

Size	Tires	Tubes
30x5	$4.25	$1.95
33x5	3.95	1.75
34x5	4.25	2.25
32x6	7.95	2.95
36x6	9.95	4.45

TRUCK BALLOON TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes
6.00-20	$3.75	$1.65
7.50-20	4.45	1.95
7.00-20	5.95	2.95
ALL OTHER SIZES		

Size	Tires	Tubes
33x4½	$3.45	$1.45
34x4½	3.45	1.45
30x5	3.65	1.65
33x5	3.75	1.75
35x5	3.95	1.75

Size	Tires	Tubes
34x7	$10.95	$4.65
38x7	10.95	4.65
36x9	11.45	4.95
40x8	13.25	6.95

Size	Tires	Tubes
7.50-20	$6.95	$3.75
8.25-20	6.95	4.95
9.00-20	10.95	5.65
9.75-20	13.95	6.45

DEALERS WANTED

SEND ONLY $1.00 DEPOSIT on each tire ordered. ($3.00 on each Truck Tire.) We ship balance C. O. D. Deduct 5 per cent if cash is sent in full with order. To fill order promptly we may substitute brands if necessary. ALL TUBES BRAND NEW—GUARANTEED—

PERRY-FIELD TIRE & RUBBER CO.

2328-30 S. Michigan Av., Dept. 3901-A, Chicago, Ill.

STOP suffering from PILES

SENSATIONAL NEW DISCOVERY

Just a simple capsule that you swallow. Does away with messy ointments and suppositories.

SEND AT ONCE FOR

FREE TRIAL SAMPLE and Booklet

Enclose 10c to cover mailing costs to

RAPS LABORATORIES

6 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn N. Y. Dept. M-10.

Hail, the King!!

The king of fast moving detective-mystery authors joins the parade of writers who are making DOUBLE DETECTIVE the best detective story monthly in the field:

ERLE STANLEY GARDNER

In the November issue of "DOUBLE D," Gardner introduces a walloping new series of crime adventures set against the Hollywood background which he knows so well . . . the Hollywood where he has spent years in the major studios, writing and helping produce grade-A pictures with the highest paid stars.

The first of the series is entitled—

A HEARSE FOR HOLLYWOOD

In this exciting, fast-paced yarn, you will meet *Jax Keen,* trouble shooter for *Abe Blitzmount,* whose particular job was to keep the reputations of *Abie's* players sweet and unsullied. *Abie* would no more think of laughing off the loss of a million dollar investment than he would of—*well, wait till you meet Abie!*

Start this exciting new series in the November issue of DOUBLE D. Each story will be complete in itself, and each will be crammed with thrills.

NOVEMBER DOUBLE DETECTIVE

10c

on sale at all good newsstands Sept. 8th to Oct. 7th

DOUBLE DETECTIVE, 280 Broadway, New York City

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MIND POWER

A FREE BOOK

Develop your personal, creative power! Awaken the silent, sleeping forces in your own consciousness. Become Master of your own life. Push aside all obstacles with a new energy you have overlooked. The Rosicrucians know how, and will help you apply the greatest of all powers in man's control. Create health and abundance for yourself. Write for *Free* book, "The Secret Heritage." It tells how you may receive these teachings for study and use. It means the dawn of a new day for you. Address: Scribe L. N. K.

The Rosicrucians

SAN JOSE —AMORC— CALIFORNIA

"The Rosicrucians are NOT a religious organization"

AMAZING GROFLEX SHOES

NEED NO BREAKING IN

EARN BIG COMMISSIONS AND
YOUR OWN SHOES FREE
AS BONUS WITHOUT EXTRA COST

Show outstanding line—men's, women's, children's shoes. 200 Fall Styles, including famous Air Conditioned KUSHIONTRED Shoes that bring new joy to walking! Offer shirts, ties, hosiery as free Bonus to customers. No experience needed. Selling outfit with actual shoe samples furnished at no cost. Write TODAY for full information and FREE Selling Kit.

WRITE FOR FREE OUTFIT

TANNERS SHOE CO. 403 Boston, Mass.

LAW STUDY AT HOME

Legally trained men win higher positions and bigger success in business and public life. Greater opportunities now than ever before. Big corporations are headed by men with legal training.

More Ability: More Prestige: More Money

We guide you step by step. You can train at home during spare time. Degree of LL. B. Successful graduates in every section of the U. S. We furnish all text material, including 14-volume Law Library. Low cost, easy terms. Get our valuable 48-page "Law Training for Leadership" and "Evidence" books FREE. Send for them NOW.

LaSalle Extension University, Dept. 958-L | Chicago
A Correspondence Institution

BE A RAILWAY TRAFFIC INSPECTOR

LET US HELP YOU TO A GOOD JOB!

Simple, home-study course trains you quickly in *Railway and Bus Passenger Traffic Inspection*, and upon completion we place graduates at up to $135 per month, plus expenses to start, *or refund tuition.* Interesting work—travel if you like. Opportunities for ambitious men—19 to 50. Free Booklet.

Standard Business Training Institute, Div. 5009, Buffalo, N. Y.

BIG PAY SELLING SHIRTS

Experience unnecessary to earn steady income selling shirts and sportswear factory to wearer. Gigantic variety; one year guarantee; customized fit (90 sizes). Half price offer creates amazing values. World's largest concern of its kind. Our sales force earns $100,000.00 yearly. Get your share! Postcard brings you complete money-making outfit free. Write **Dept. 406, Rosecliff-Quaker, 1239 Broadway, New York.**

ASTHMA

WRITE FOR *FREE TRIAL OFFER!*

If you suffer from Asthma Paroxysms, from coughs, gasping, wheezing—write quick for daring FREE TRIAL OFFER of real relief. Inquiries from so-called "hopeless" cases especially invited. Write **NACOR, 296-U State Life Bldg., INDIANAPOLIS, IND.**

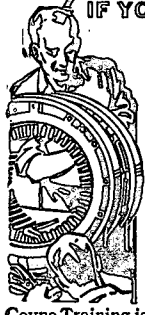
TRAIN FOR ELECTRICITY IN 12 WEEKS

BY ACTUAL WORK ON MOTORS, GENERATORS, ENGINES Etc.

PAY TUITION AFTER GRADUATION

I'll Finance Your Training

IF YOU'RE SHORT OF MONEY



Mail coupon today for details of my **"Pay after graduation plan"** and famous Coyne **"Learn by Doing"** method of practical shop training for your start for success in this big-pay field. Age or lack of money need not hold you back . . . If you are short of money you can get training **first**—then pay for most of it in small monthly payments after you graduate.

LEARN BY DOING IN 12 WEEKS IN COYNE SHOPS

Coyne Training is practical training, easy to grasp . . . you learn quickly by doing **actual jobs on real electrical machinery** in **my shops.** Not by books—**not** a correspondence or a home study course—you are trained right here in my big Chicago training shops. You don't need previous experience or a lot of book learning. Expert instructors guide **you every step of the way.** Start any time.

EARN WHILE LEARNING

Job Help After Graduation

Big things ahead in Electricity mean steady jobs, good pay, and a real future for many trained men in this fascinating "live" industry. **Thousands of opportunities.** Rush the coupon TODAY for **Big Free Book** with many photos of the great Coyne Shops in Chicago — Opportunities in Electricity—How we can train you for your start in this field and let you **pay your tuition after graduation in easy monthly payments.** If you need part time work to help with living expenses my employment department will help you. **After graduation you will be given Free lifetime employment service.**

DIESEL, ELECTRIC REFRIGERATION AND AIR CONDITIONING TRAINING

Now included at no extra cost. Take advantage of this training to increase your earning capacity.

GET MY STORY

I have a mighty interesting story to tell about my school that will interest any fellow who wants to get ahead . . . **Fill in the coupon today** and mail it to me and you'll get my big FREE Catalog and all the facts. *H. C. Lewis*

H. C. LEWIS, President,
Coyne Electrical School,
500 S. Paulina Street, Dept. 69-52C, Chicago, Ill.

Send me, without cost or obligation, your Big Free **Book and** details of **Pay-Tuition-After-Graduation-Offer.**

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY ..... STATE .....

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Remember Tomorrow

By THEODORE ROSCOE

Author of "Mother Damnation," "Two Hours to Go," etc.

Through the Forest of Fire they march, the soldier dead whose battle is never finished. For in that Valley of the Somme, vast armies sleep, rousing at night to strike terror to the hearts of the living. And tomorrow is as yesterday, ever alive and remembering. Beginning a fine new novel

In the summer after the Battle of Landen, the most sanguinary battle of the Seventeenth Century in Europe, the earth, saturated with the blood of twenty thousand slain, broke forth into millions of poppies, and the traveler who passed that vast sheet of scarlet might well fancy that the earth had given up her dead—

Taboos, etc. Frazer's Golden Bough.

Accursed Battle Ground, One Day Its Bones Shall Rise, The Captains Be Accused—

Aftermath of Glory

CHAPTER I

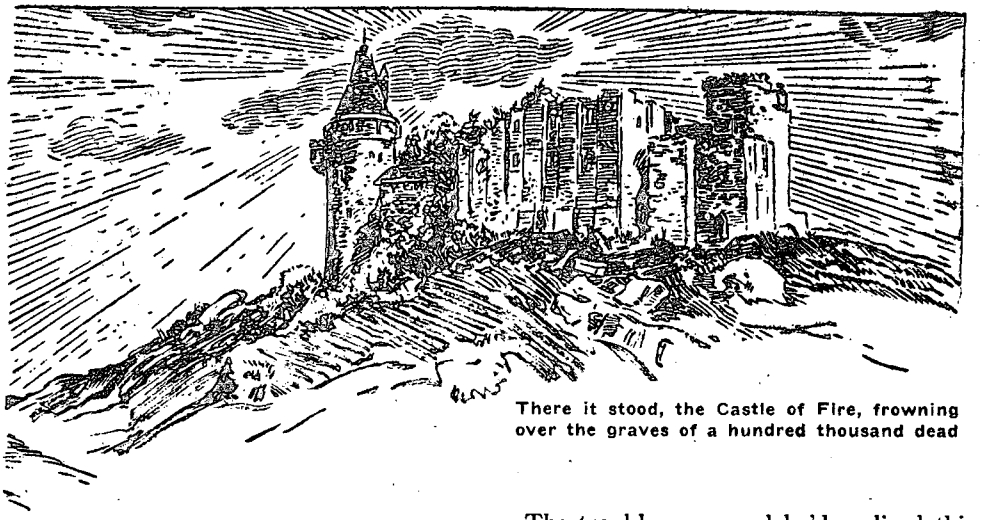
NO BATTLE CEASED

BILL SHEPHERD didn't like it. . . . The road was lonely, and the dead man stared. He could not have been dead long, his eyes were open and glassy. Outstretched there in a nest of fresh poppies alongside the road, stiffly horizontal, he resembled a body on display in a bed of floral tributes. But an undertaker would have pried open the clenched fists and sewed shut the eyelids. Bill Shepherd didn't like those eyes, unblinded by the car-lights, staring up at him in glassy fixation. At distance they had showed as discs of green, and he had stopped, expecting a dog.

Perspiration broke out on his forehead as he saw it was a peasant, a farmer in loose blue smock and corduroy, lying face up, dead on a slope of wet wildflowers. Bill Shepherd switched off the engine of his roadster and listened, hoping to hear another car.

Immediately the night sneaked in around him; woodsy silence composed of a thous-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



There it stood, the Castle of Fire, frowning over the graves of a hundred thousand dead

and infinitesimal sounds, water rustling through grass, a creaking limb, somewhere a tree frog—the silence of a forest after rain, dripping and leafy. Beyond the rays of the car-lights the summer night, drenched after thunder-shower, was an inky oblivion.

There was only visible a short stretch of road—brown mud furrowed by deep coffee-filled ruts—a steamy corridor walled by dark underbrush and the skeletal silhouettes of black trees.

Dead men can be frightening on any road at night, but this Forêt de Feu was different. Knowing what he knew, Bill Shepherd could feel his hair going up. The poppy bed made a splash of orange against a background of charred timber—the peasant's smock was pale blue among the blossoms—the sightless eyes were agate-green—the upturned face glistened, a grimacing death-mask of wet marble.

Bill Shepherd swallowed and looked around.

No use wishing—the nearest village was eight miles back, and another car wasn't coming. He found himself glaring at tire-tracks printed in the roadway ahead. Of course. Some hit and run driver had skidded around that bend, and sideswiped this poor farmer. Pretending his stomach wasn't squirming, Bill Shepherd leaned out for a closer look.

The trouble was—and he'd realized this at first glance—that body didn't look as if it had been struck by a car. No muddy splatter or mangling. Rigid frame and staring eyes, the man might have died there of a fit.

SHEPHERD gulped. Whether he wanted to or not, he had to climb out and examine that body. He kicked open the low-slung door and stepped gingerly down into the mud.

Then it wanted some resolution to cross over to that poppy-grown knoll. A sweat bead trickled down from his temple, and cords were ticking in his throat.

It wasn't that he was afraid of corpses—that would be a laugh after ten years of bodies on stairways, bodies plunging through trap doors, cadavers hanging from chandeliers, jamming fireplace chimneys, mouldering under beds. Yet the nearest he'd come to that sort of thing until now was his typewriter.

The minute he moved away from his car and let the night close in behind him, all those stories he'd heard today prowled into his thoughts and made his neck-hairs quiver in apprehension.

"Bah!" he said aloud. "I've invented enough yarns of my own! Ought to know more than to believe the bedtime stories of these fool Frenchmen!"

He slogged around the front of his

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

roadster. The road was a paste, and his shoes made a sucking sound, sinking to their laces in the mud. Swearing, he forced himself to the poppy knoll, went to one knee beside the body, and tried, bluffly nonchalant, to flex an arm.

The dead man's stare was impersonal, his arm rigid and wooden.

Bill Shepherd thought: "I suppose it's rigor mortis!" and couldn't remember how long it was supposed to be before rigor mortis set in. He could remark no evidence of violence, accidental or otherwise, and he managed to hunt through the man's trouser pockets for something that might identify him.

He found a new St. Christopher medallion and five francs. Then he supposed he'd better take a good look at the dead man's face. Kneeling as he was, he intercepted the lights from the car, and he'd purposely avoided that glassy stare. Leaning to one side, he braved a hasty glance at the dead man's features.

Breath went out of him with a sound of "Hunnnnh!"

He sprang up, looked around wildly, hunting the roadside underbrush and a path that came down through it, glaring about him with frightened eyes. Trees in the background assumed fantastic shapes, dark stumps and jagged limbs were witch-like arms reaching for him out of the undergrowth; he wheeled and shied at a gray hulk crouching in the brambles beyond the poppy bed, a dark monster squatting in readiness to leap out.

Then he saw the crouching hulk was a trench mortar tilted in rusty disuse, its muzzle draped by wild grape, its base buried under a tangle of briar and woodbine. These woods were littered with the abandoned machinery of War—old engines of death left to rust in thickets that were nourished by a compost of human blood and bone. But their harvest time had been 1916—this murder, not an hour old, was out of season.

The peasant had been strangled! Murder-steeled fingers, clenching the man's throat, had left the mark of nails and talons deep-printed in the flesh. A queerish, blue-pink pallor tinted the suffocated face. But in the ground around that body there was no track, no trampling, no footprint other than the peasant's own which came down the muddy path out of the woods.

Black thunder fell down a stairway in the sky and rolled off into smothery silence. He wheeled; jumped for the car.

The road was a channel of liquefied clay, and the old Hispano-Suiza swerved and slewed as he drove in headlong panic, pursued by black shadows and blacker imaginings through the witchy silhouettes of the forest.

"The Forêt de Feu—?"

Memory quoted so loudly in his mind he could almost feel the breath of whispered words in his ear. "But I would not go into those woods at night, *monsieur*. For a million francs—for ten million, I would not go! Because the Forêt de Feu is in the Red Zone, *monsieur*—and there the dead have not yet died. The World War is not over, *monsieur*. The Battle of the Somme is still going on, and the soldiers who died in the Red Zone are still fighting it, and their front line is in the Forêt de Feu!"

CHAPTER II

CASTLE DANGEROUS

IT HAD all started that morning in the Paris office of Bertrand et Frer, although the Paris office of Bertrand et Frer looked like the last place in the world for anything like that to start.

Opening the door of Bertrand et Frer, you disturbed one of those sad thimble-like little bells such as announce the advent of a customer in an old maid's notion shop. The jingle, in this case, warned the visitor he was intruding. The quiet wanted to be left alone.

The place was as dim as evening. A skeletal chandelier, converted from gas to electricity, burned one feeble bulb as a sop to the present era. Walls of brown books and a massive table that looked like a casket in a library formed in the gloom.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bill Shepherd had said, "Hello," to no one in particular, and sat down.

Faint echo of taxi horns in the Faubourg outside reminded him that Paris was still there. The august mahogany door marked *Private* at room's end should at least have acknowledged his presence by opening far enough to tell him to wait. He tried a discreet cough, and nothing happened. Bertrand had died? Or was it Frer?

He contemplated waking up that little bell over the entry once more. He walked to the table and wrote *Silence Please* in the dust. Then he put his hands in his pockets and jangled some coins. This reminded him of the purpose behind his errand, and in abrupt resolution he started toward the impervious mahogany door. He touched the round brass knob with a tentative finger; then heard a murmur of voices beyond the paneling; cocked an ear to listen.

Distinctly he heard a woman's low voice say, "—Château de Feu!"

Bill Shepherd jerked his finger from the knob with the same reflex that sent his eyebrows up. He hadn't meant to eavesdrop, but circumstances alter cases. Deliberately he listened to:

"—Château de Feu. *Oui, oui, oui,* I remind you it is dangerous." The feminine voice blurred into an undertone he couldn't translate.

Bill Shepherd thought: "Now, what the—?"

A reedy voice piped on the other side of the door, "But, *mademoiselle—!*"

"Attend," the low voice cut in firmly, "I remind you it is dangerous. Not a word of this to be divulged, you comprehend."

"Very well, *mademoiselle.*"

Sound of chairs scuffing back on carpet. Rustle of movement. Bill Shepherd returned to his chair. He was lighting a cigarette as the door at room's end began to open.

HE THOUGHT the woman who came across the threshhold recoiled as she saw him, but he wasn't sure. He was only certain, as she passed his chair hurriedly and brushed on out into the hall, that she knew how to wear black, and that her eyes were as interesting as any that had ever given him a look. The bell jingled excitedly at her exit. He had stood up swiftly to open the door for her departure, but her haste had outmaneuvered this gallantry. Holding the door ajar he had a glimpse of her as she reached the street.

A slow grin twitched up one corner of William Shepherd's mouth. The hushed and dim-lit reception room, the voices behind closed doors, ("I remind you it is dangerous—"), the mysterious lady in black— The other side of his mouth went up. *Chapter One!*

No. The thing was really a disease. He was back at his old game again, and of course he was imagining intrigue. Certainly in France there might be more than one Château de Feu.

A voice from the other end of the room said, "Monsieur Shepherd?"

He wheeled, a little abashed.

The figure now occupying the inner doorway looked as if it had just stepped out of one of the older law books on the shelves. It was dry, and needed dusting off and a new binding. William Shepherd was put in mind of a dummy that had been for a long time in the window of a customer's store. Black frock coat that rustled its hem around rusty knee-caps. High stock collar and plush cravat. A black toupee. A face like an old portrait painting with dried-up little eyes behind pince-nez.

Bill Shepherd admitted his identity by a gesture with his cigarette. "I'm afraid I came early. I was anxious to see Monsieur Bertrand about—"

"I am Monsieur Bertrand."

"Je suis très content de faire votre connaissance, Monsieur Bertrand."

"I too am most happy to make the acquaintance of the son of a client who was always to me the most amiable. Your father was regarded not only as client by us, *monsieur,* but, if I may say so, as a friend. In Paris he was more than highly

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

esteemed. Your father was a great, a famous man. We thought of him almost, one might say, as a Frenchman."

Bill Shepherd thought how that would have amused his father—to be called great, famous and a Frenchman. He had a mental picture of the big boisterous man passing ten-dollar bills and champagne around the Moulin Rouge and Zelli's.

Monsieur Bertrand was going on, clearing his throat at just the right place for *douleur*: "Yes, how well I recall his last visit. Two years after the War. Does it seem seventeen years ago? And your mother, she died the same year. It was tragic, yes? It is sad."

Bill Shepherd said rather stiffly, "Yes, it is."

"But," Monsieur Bertrand sighed, "Bertrande et Frer will always recall that most happy association."

"My father always felt, Monsieur Bertrand, that when he left his European affairs in the hands of Bertrand et Frer they were as safe as if he had deposited them in the Bank of France."

"Bertrand et Frer were honored to have been chosen as your father's European executors, and feel confident there is no house in France whose integrity is better able to uphold this trust."

"I'm sure of that, Monsieur Bertrand. Incidentally, before we get down to business, who was the lady who left your office just now?"

"*Monsieur* wishes to know—?"

"I'm sorry. I don't want to appear inquisitive, but I thought I'd met her somewhere before—Biarritz or maybe Monte Carlo."

"So. But there is no reason why I should not divulge the lady's name. It is Madame—eh—Madame Mallarmier. Her husband was a French officer and a suicide, poor fellow. Left her in many legal difficulties. She happens to be Swiss; perhaps you met her at St. Moritz. She is here to settle the matter of an estate in Switzerland."

"Well, although I don't seem to know her after all, I sympathize with her. I'm here to settle the matter of my own estate in France, and have to do it in a hurry. As I told you over the telephone yesterday, I've come to see about the Château de Feu."

"The—? *Ah oui, certainement, alors.* The Château de Feu. Of course—the Château de Feu. Please come in, Monsieur Shepherd. I am afraid you are going to be disappointed, *monsieur*. It seems there are some difficulties in the matter of the Château de Feu."

BILL SHEPHERD was surprised. For the last two years he had been well aware of "difficulties" in the matter of Château de Feu, but a beautiful and unknown lady in black had not previously been connected with them. Somehow his father—that surprising man—had recognized and cherished the love of the wife whose faith in him had lifted him by the bootstraps out of a Scranton coal mine. Impervious to nothing else that money could buy, Old Bill would have had no investment in Paris romance. Probably the Château de Feu had been Old Bill's last white elephant to hand down to an impoverished heir.

Certainly the title was clear. Too clear. Taxes and assessments to be paid the first of the month had left young Bill no doubt of that. And those, up to now, had been the "difficulties." How to meet the neglected taxes on the place.

Living in New York, he'd all but forgot this obscure French *château* left him by his father, as one forgets something cumbersome and gaudy tucked away for sentimental reasons in moth balls. A French *château*—he'd kept it as a gesture to Old Bill, and because Hugh, his older brother, had died under fire somewhere around there, wherever it was, during the War. They'd never found the body, but Hugh's last letter had said he was running a dressing station "of all places, in Father's foolish *château*."

He had never seen the Château de Feu; somehow hadn't wanted to. But now the day for extravagance and sentiment had passed; a *château* in France was hardly

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the keepsake for an American stranded in Paris with two hundred francs and a second-hand Hispano-Suiza that drank gasoline with the insatiable thirst of a broken-down Russian Duke. There were bills. His very name was characterized by Bill. Not that he'd expected to raise any money on the *château* but he'd hoped for something from the place, if only a secluded roof to think under for a while. A mysterious woman in the woodpile, however, had not been among his anticipations.

Smiling expressionlessly at Monsieur Bertrand, Bill Shepherd wondered if he hadn't imagined those words he'd heard through the door. The office of Bertrand et Frer looked too crustily respectable for any mystery. Conceivably the beauty in black might own a Château de Feu in Switzerland, and have been referring to a condition of the floors.

Bill Shepherd said, when it became apparent Monsieur Bertrand was waiting for him to speak: "As I wrote you from America, Monsieur Bertrand, it is necessary for me to sell the Château de Feu."

Monsieur Bertrand adjusted his pince-nez. If voice had color, Bill Shepherd thought, this one would be the color of sand. "Ah. I trust you had a pleasant voyage coming from America, Monsieur Shepherd?"

"Rough all the way," Bill Shepherd said cheerfully. "You see, I thought if I came over personally to see about the sale of the *château* it would save a lot of—"

"And how are things at present in the United States, Monsieur Shepherd?"

"Now about the *château*—"

"But the Depression in America, it has lifted—?"

"NOT for me," Bill Shepherd declared doggedly. Monsieur Bertrand's evasive technique was entertaining, but Bill Shepherd told himself he would be even more entertained when he learned the reason for this evasion.

He faced Monsieur Bertrand squarely. "The Depression hasn't lifted for me, as the unpaid taxes on the Château de Feu may have indicated to you. I've run out of pocket money. I'm broke. I can't afford a bottle of Scotch right now, much less the upkeep on a historical French estate. I thought if you could sell the *château* for me—"

"But *monsieur!*" the dry face looked shocked. "Bertrand et Frer had no idea you were in such financial—eh—straits. A man of your position—"

"—Is usually riding the brake-rods on a freight train out of town. Instead of that, I came to Europe the southern route and stopped for a night at Monte Carlo. They say the wheel is on the level, too. I did get out with my trousers, but you can understand—"

"But your father's bonds, Monsieur Shepherd! Your father's American holdings—!"

"Burned up eight years ago. Swedish Matches and a short circuit in Mid-West Power. I can't imagine what happened to the rest— I'm only a mystery-story writer. It seems I'm left with this French property, and I can't afford to keep it. The point is, Monsieur Bertrand"—Bill Shepherd put both hands firmly on the desk-top, leaning forward a little—"have you been able to find a buyer for the Château de Feu?"

Monsieur Bertrand's eyeglasses reflected surprise. He murmured, "Ah." He nodded. "Yes. But then. A buyer." He put the tips of dry fingers together, tilted back in his chair and gravely regarded a point in the ceiling. The Château de Feu was somewhere overhead among cracks in the ceiling-plaster; it was surrounded by difficulties which Monsieur Bertrand could see, and, seeing them, Monsieur Bertrand was reluctant to reveal them to his client.

"*Non,* Monsieur Shepherd, it distresses me to confess the inability of Bertrand et Frer to find as yet a prospective buyer for the Château de Feu."

"It doesn't distress you, Monsieur Bertrand, anywhere near as much as it distresses me."

"However, I wish to emphasize 'as yet.' Given more time—"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I wish I had more time," Bill Shepherd said flatly. "The French government's given me a month's notice. Pay up the back taxes or they'll be forced to confiscate the property. I know it's my fault for letting 'em slide at a time when I was able to pay 'em, but I haven't got the money any more, and I couldn't raise it now in a month of Sundays. I can't even meet my hotel bill at the Crillon. If I can't sell that château I'll lose it. Of course you advertised the property for sale?"

"The *château* and the surrounding estate, as you advised in your letter." Monsieur Bertrand shook his head. "There were a number of inquiries, but they failed to materialize."

"You made the price interesting?"

"Following your instructions, Monsieur Shepherd, we made the price positively a bargain. *Non,* it is *deplorable.*" Monsieur Bertrand's shoulders lifted in sympathy. "We could find no interested prospects."

"But if you put the sale up to a good real estate operator—?"

"We have placed the matter in the hands of one of the largest, the most enterprising realty houses in France. Attend. I will show you their report." Monsieur Bertrand made a dry rustling of papers in a desk drawer; extracted a letter from a file. "However,"—pinching off his glasses and tapping the correspondence with a shiny lens—"before I give this to you, it might be well for me to prepare you—it is an unusual letter, believe me!—by reminding you of the condition of the estate in question, the *château,* Monsieur Shepherd. It has not been—how do you say? modernized."

"You mean there isn't electricity, ice cubes, a two-car garage—?"

"Perhaps; but that is not exactly"—Monsieur Bertrand paused, frowned at the letter—"not exactly what I mean. You comprehend, *monsieur,* the location of the *château*—"

"In the country."

"In France, *oui.* But in the north of France. Several hundred miles from Paris. An afternoon's drive, I should say, north of the city of Amiens. In the Province of Picardy. *Voilà!* Monsieur Shepherd realizes there was a war—"

"My older brother was killed—"

"Indeed, I remember well your father on his last visit to Paris speaking of it. *Quel dommage.* A pity. But so. It was because of this, that your father refused thereafter to occupy the *château.* You comprehend? The *château* was somewhat damaged during the war; not utterly, I understand, but there is some ruin. And it has not since been repaired."

BILL SHEPHERD nodded. "Of course under those circumstances a buyer wouldn't want to sink a lot of money in the place, with the back taxes and all. But there's a hundred acres in timber on the estate. The Forêt de Feu. Certainly that ought to be worth something."

Monsieur Bertrand sighed. "There are difficulties."

"More difficulties?"

Monsieur Bertrand's blink was troubled. He fastened on his eyeglasses, squinted at the paper in his hand, frowned exasperation at Bill Shepherd. "*Monsieur!* It seems this Forêt de Feu—*ma foi*—it is that which comprises the chief difficulty in the matter of selling the estate. *Monsieur* will agree with me that here is a problem the most extraordinary. This timber, *monsieur*—this forest—never in all my experience have I encountered a matter as incredible. Regard."

The office of the Agency Honneteau wished to thank Monsieur Bertrand for his kind consignment, and hoped he was as well as they were. The letter continued with the usual indirections and then:

Our Amiens office advises us it has been impossible to sell the old Château de Feu, not only because of a prohibitive accumulation of unpaid taxes; but the estate, as you know, is situated in the Forêt de Feu, midway between the villages of Contalmaison and Thiepval, off the main road, and lying in the very heart of that region devastated by the World War, known as the Red Zone.

Some of the surrounding country has

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

remained unrehabilitated; the *château*, itself, stands in considerable disrepair; and a further barrier to disposal of this property comes in lieu of the ugly local reputation the *château* and forested *demesne* seems to have attained.

Imagine the reluctance of a prospective customer when, at mere mention of the Forêt de Feu, the peasants of the district start shaking their heads and crossing themselves. Investigation discloses the most astounding rumors concerning the place—stories common to illiterate peasantry—some of which, however, seem to have foundation in several sinister occurrences recent to the forest.

Bodies found in the uncleared woods have recalled the days of the Invasion, and lately, it appears, there have been one or two unexplained deaths in the neighborhood. This may be no more than gossip; yet, perhaps as nowhere else in France, the countryside there remains still overshadowed by the last War, and under such adverse publicity an outright sale of the Château de Feu seems unlikely."

BILL SHEPHERD narrowed a stare at the concluding paragraph. *Ugly local reputation. Sinister occurrences.* A crinkle hardened at the corners of his eyes as they flicked back over the line: *one or two unexplained deaths.* Really, that casual "one or two" was overdoing it.

This cryptic epistle on a matter of real estate read like the opening installment of *Three-Fingered Jack's Last Clue,* and made less sense. He folded the letter slowly.

"What is it all about?"

Monsieur Bertrand raised dismayed shoulders, "Truly, I know no more than the letter indicates. *Non,* I am quite baffled—"

Pushing back his chair, Bill Shepherd said with forced amiability, "Well, there's only one thing for me to do, and that's go there and find out."

Monsieur Bertrand spried to his feet. For the first time during the interview his features showed open distress. "But my dear young sir. Do you not think it would be better to wait, to inquire of the real estate agent, to make a thorough investigation of—"

"Yes on the last two; no on the waiting. There isn't time for a lot of letter writing. If something funny has been happening around there—"

"But Monsieur Shepherd! I assure you—" The other made a deprecatory gesture. "Do not take this letter too literally. French peasants are given to such talk—old wives' tales—nonsense—the back-country districts, in particular those devastated by the War, are alive wtih stupid—"

"That's just it," he interrupted with some heat. "After all, I own the *château,* and if it's been devalued by some sort of vicious gossip I'd like to know about it. Time I looked up the old place, anyway." He picked up his hat in resolution. "Ten o'clock now, I ought to be able to drive out there before dark, only a couple of hundred miles. Matter of fact, I was going there anyway since I can't afford to stay at the Crillon."

Monsieur Bertrand said almost shrilly, "I advise against it. There is only the caretaker—that one employed years ago by your father, and he has been there ever since—Archambaud Landru. The place will be in no condition for you! You would arrive late at night and find the *château* locked and dark—"

Bill Shepherd was thinking of a throaty voice behind this mahogany door, an intriguing whisper. He said, giving Monsieur Bertrand a steady look, "I can make it before dark."

"Do not consider it!" A wallet was quivering in the dry brown hands. *"Tiens!* a thousand francs to establish your hotel credit. You shall remain in Paris; continue at the Crillon in the comfort to which an American is accustomed. *Non,* but you must allow me the honor of this small hospitality. Meantime, do nothing hasty.

"I regret the impetuosity of showing you such an item: it was merely that I wished you to comprehend the delay. One cannot expedite business, you must realize, in a country such as this, stranded always between the ruins of the last war and the specter of the next one.

"Stay in Paris and do not worry about

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the *château.* Tomorrow—no, the day after—let us confer. Certain authorities can be consulted on this matter. Given a little more time, Monsieur Shepherd, I am convinced Bertrand et Frer will be able to negotiate a more than satisfactory arrangement on the Château de Feu."

But he had not stayed in Paris, and now, driving through storming blackness in the Forêt de Feu, with that dead man in the night behind him, he wished he had taken the lawyer's advice.

Only he hadn't believed in Monsieur Bertrand. He hadn't believed in that letter from the realty agent. He had stuffed the thousand francs into his pocket, nodded pleasantly, sauntered out to his car, and started out to visit the Château de Feu.

CHAPTER III

THE SILENT LAND

ONCE free of the city, the morning's adventure was credible. Black veiled lady—stuffed-fox lawyer—haunted *château*—penniless heir—he had written such stuff a hundred times. Bill Shepherd sighed. Any editor would have rejected Monsieur Bertrand.

He let out the big Hisso. Traffic was sparse in the yellow July heat, but the breeze at sixty-five was cool.

Rationalize it or not, old Bertrand *had* been on pins and needles. Why all the throat-clearing and hedging about a mere real estate transaction? That letter, too, with its whispery insinuations of the sinister—maybe it needed confirmation at that.

Bill Shepherd put his hand into his pocket, half expecting the letter to have been imagined. No, there was the letter, and there he was, himself, thirty kilometers out of Paris, the white road ahead. An arrow told him to take a left turn for Amiens and points north, and in the noonday doldrum a village's roofs and treetops and steeple were set in his windshield like a painting. Better stop and tank up with petrol, if he was going on with this; but before he went further he wanted another look at that letter.

He pulled over to the curb of a sleepy village square; opened the letter skeptically. There it was, all right—that line about bodies found in the uncleared woods and "one or two unexplained deaths" in the neighborhood. His eye traveled on to the sentence: *Yet, perhaps as nowhere else in France, the countryside there remains still overshadowed by the last War*— and then he stiffened his stare on the typewritten page.

Slanted across the paper in his hand, as if summoned there by the words themselves, was the thin gray shadow of a bayonet.

Bill Shepherd looked up startled, and saw standing over his car a giant soldier.

YOU began to pass them in the first little villages north of Paris; you didn't notice them at first, then you did. A public square, a monument overlooking the curb, a granite Poilu standing guard above the cobbles, or a grieving Mother France with a dying soldier in bronze cradled in her arms.

Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite
Pour la France—1914-1918
"To those who gave their lives . . .
"To the valiant soldiers who died . . .
"To the sons of this village who were slain . . ."

Above bronze-plated death lists like the pages of telephone directories, the stone gunners died or stood at silent attention on their pedestals; buglers blew a soundless Last Post; Mother France knelt down with drooping Phrygian cap, her face buried in sorrowful hands. You saw these mourning figures in every town, village and crossroads; they intruded on a traveler's consciousness like some endless series of advertising displays; and as the highway went further northward you saw what had sculpted them there.

In a landscape of checkerboard pastures and quaint French farms, geese and indolent bicycles and lazy wains—on a road that swept smoothly toward a cobalt horizon where slow clouds grazed like flocks of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

washed sheep—you passed (instead of highway billboards for soft drinks, gasolines and chewing gums) the pages of history. Tablets along the roadside recording a time marched by. Signposts that measured the highwater mark, the tidal inrush and ebb of a disaster that had come and gone and left those names in bronze on the village squares.

Here The Uhlans of Von Kluck Penetrated To Their Farthest Point To Be Stopped By The Army Of Galliéni, 4 September, 1914. (Nineteen miles from Paris—that had been close!)

At This Bridge French Cavalry Of Manoury Withstood For Five Hours Three Prussian Guard Regiments Of The German Right Wing. (Blue and gray-green horsemen grappling over a trout stream.)

In The Orchard At The Right The Second British Army Corps Under General Smith-Dorrien Made Its Headquarters After The Retreat From Compiégne. (The Old Contemptibles had come!)

On The Night of 15 September '14, General Joffre Occupied The Farmhouse On The Left And Issued Orders For The Battle Of The Marne. (The turning of the tide!)

Along that highway to Amiens the names and dates were like the lingering echoes of yesterday's half-forgotten songs. Joffre. Von Kluck. The Old Contemptibles. Fragments of the past, left strewn along the roadside in the summer weeds. Von Bissing. Sir John French. The Blue Devils. 1914-1915. Years and names unremembered in America where they thought of the War as 1918 and a song by George M. Cohan.

But the echoes you heard along that Amiens turnpike were not *Over There* and *Where Do We Go From Here,* but the *Marseillaise, the Brabançonne, It's A Long Way To Tipperary,* and *Ein Feste Burg Ist Unser Gott.*

You heard the clack of cavalry, the summer's doze startled by the first shocks of iron thunder, the tramp, tramp, tramp of hobnails coming out of the east. The little markers along the highway were like bulletins crying the alarm, telling a story of French Red-legs in desperate retreat, refugees in panic-stricken migration, Tommies from across the Channel fumbling their khaki lines on unfamiliar roads. You could picture a sullen tide of gray rolling slowly, implacably across the landscape, like a flood of smoking lava, incinerating all before it as it came.

MEMORIES followed that north-bound highway across France. Of miles of bayonets falling back before miles of machine guns. Of burning grain fields and shell-chopped trees. Rivers of helmets, banging artillery trains, cavalcades of ambulance, foraging parties, charging infantry, attack and counter-attack.

The captains and the kings had departed, but the landmarks remained—a broken mill with vines overgrowing its stalled wheel, a deserted roadside inn with the sky showing through its roof, farmhouse walls splotched with plaster patches that looked like adhesive on old wounds.

You were surprised to see the Germans had come so far; and if you'd had a brother with the Allies, you might feel a surge of sentimental pride at the crossroads where an assault of Canadian Regulars had driven the Prussians back. You might wonder what colossal gall had brought that invasion goose-stepping here; what god-like conceit had given it permission.

Then at Amiens, where Bill Shepherd stopped for lunch, the echoes loudened. There was a cathedral spire moth-eaten by shrapnel holes, and he drove across a bridge marked *The River Somme.* He hadn't heard of the Somme, or thought of it, since a letter, one of the last, from Hugh. Odd to come across it now. Like dreaming of a place you'd seen before in a dream. He paused to read about it on a tablet at the bridge-head.

The Battle of the Somme—July-November 1916. The British Supported by the French in an Attempt to Hurl the Germans from the Fields of Picardy. Stalemate of Trench Warfare was not Broken by this Tremendous Allied Effort—The Germans Holding Their Lines—The Allies Counting A Loss Of Half A Million Men.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1916, Red-Legs and the Old Contemptibles had gone; there were new names on the roadside plaques. Sir Douglas Haig and General Rawlinson. General Micheler and General Fayolle. Today the Somme was placid, ribboning soapy green across the landscape, but as you followed its bank beyond Amiens, you saw where monster cannon had once smashed its bridges and churned its channel to a boiling torrent. The furies of that tempest had left something more than bronze tablets in the landscape beyond Amiens.

Late in the afternoon, driving slowly along a ridge-top, Bill Shepherd came upon a vista such as he had never imagined. A road sign directed him to look at the view, and he stopped the car, and climbed out, shading his eyes to stare.

Before him spread Picardy—rolling miles of tableland nested with little pottery-roofed villages and meandered by winding pasture streams. Nowhere did the landscaping rise to obstruct the view; the eye seemed to carry as far as the Belgian border.

How still it was. . . .

In all that horizon-bound distance of earth and sky nothing stirred. He had read somewhere that the Picards called their country the Silent Land, but this hush was something more than a phenomenon caused by a configuration of land-surface. It was as if the afternoon had paused in its waning, and time with space here remained suspended in a spell. Somewhere back there near Amiens a detour had turned him off the national highway, and he might have come to the edge of a country in mirage.

The stillness around him was that of a reflection in a mirror-quiet lake. Smoke stood becalmed in an erect blue tendril above the chimney of a far-seen cottage; southward on a ridge above the marshy greens of the Somme valley a miniature train moved motionlessly and soundlessly across the picture; far westward an airplane was a gnat-speck stationary in a high distillation of azure. The quiet deepened for the murmuring of bees, and the landscape was a painting by Corot.

What struck Bill Shepherd next was the briliant color-work of flowered poppy fields emblazoned across the nearer meadows like red flannel blankets spread out to dry in the sun. And in the panorama beyond, what seemed a curious litter—at first glance, of odd-shaped rocks and boulders left scattered across the terrain as if by some long-ago glacier—and acres of white that, patchworked in pattern across the whole topography, looked like ranging expanses of unmelted snow.

A pointer at the roadside directed his attention to a pair of field binoculars mounted on a little platform nearby—*See The Battleground Of The Somme—4 fr.* There was a map for tourists, and arrows pointing out the various sectors. Bill Shepherd peered through the glasses, inserted the coins, adjusted the directional finder, and brought the lenses into focus.

Then he saw the littered objects weren't glacial boulders, but monuments—cenotaphs, monoliths, marble pylons, granite sculptures in distant perspective diminished to the size of figurines. Monuments everywhere as far as the eye could see. And the acres of white were armies of men.

CHAPTER IV

THE MARCHING DEAD

THE Troops! They came uphill from the direction of Albert Village and swept, company after company, across the pasture lands below him. They formed on a rise behind a stone barn at his right—*Headquarters Thirteenth British Army Corps*—and marched on toward a salient posted *Sausage Valley*. In the north they advanced along a highroad, platoon formation, moving in on Aveluy and Gommecourt, sweeping up the slopes of Beaumont Hamel. Eastward their ranks stood close about La Boiselle, Ovilliers, Mametz Wood.

More troops! Occupying the far banks of the River Ancre; extending their lines across the misty farm lands beyond. Gathered in companies along the road to Pozières; holding the turnpike going to Peronne.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Uphill and downdale they traversed the fields, debauched from sleepy woods, massed along country lanes.

What names they wore, and what actions they engaged. He consulted the map which digrammed their intricate battle positions.

There were the Black Watch and the Gordon Highlanders. The Sixth Dragoon Guards, and a battalion of the Ulster Division. The London Territorials. The Connaught Rangers. The First South-African Infantry. The Inniskillens. The South Wales Borderers. The King's Royal Rifles. The Manchester Guard.

The British were supported by battalions of the French—Fayolle's First Army Corps—companies of Lorrainers, Zouave detachments, Colonial Cavalry, Tirailleurs, Blue Devils, troops all the way from Arras to Avignon.

Sighted through the binoculars, their formations were seen to be orderly, their ranks ruled in precise parade, their flanking obliques and advance stations in perfect military alignment. Following their battle lines, Bill Shepherd could make out their dugouts and earthworks, weedy trenches running zigzag across the meadows, slopes where great shell holes had been gouged, mine craters, patches of charred timber, barren stretches of No Man's Land where hurricanes of shellfire had left a soil of loose ore. He focused the binoculars on an abandoned village—a clutter of broken walls and mounds of gray ash—and on a ridge to the east he found the German line.

The German emplacements were strangely labeled—*The Zollern Redoubt—The Schwaben Redoubt*. Holding these heights were battalions of the Prussian Guard, Bavarians, Potsdammers, Magdeburgers. 10,000 Guards Fusiliers. 18,000 Badeners. 24,000 of the Lehr Regiment. Company after company of the German Fifth Division. A battalion of the famous Cockchäfers. The crack troops of Brandenburg. Their High Command was not present, but their names were recorded on the battle-map. Ludendorf. Von Quast. Von Gallwitz. Sixt von Arnim.

On those distant slopes Bill Shepherd could make out concrete gun-pits, steel-roofed pillboxes, the brush-screened parapets of deep fortifications. The map made note of these fortifications extending for miles, but it was not the magnitude of these Martian engineerings that impressed Bill Shepherd. The limitless numbers of those men out there—!

There were thousands massed within range of his binoculars, countless thousands out of range in the rolling meadows of Picardy beyond.

In the foreground you could make them out as platoons, regiments, battalions—shoulder to shoulder on parade—each one erect, face front, the uniform twin of the next. But stepping back from a pair of high-powered field glasses, you could not find them with the naked eye. In distance their ranks merged into fused legions, their numbers blurred into multitudes.

In the presence of this vast and silent host, Bill Shepherd felt hollow and queer inside. Involuntarily he took off his hat, and as he did so there was a faint far muttering in the east where some clouds had blundered together, and there came to his mind a passage from *The Shropshire Lad.*

On the idle hill of summer,
Sleepy with the sound of streams,
Far I hear the steady drummer,
Drumming like a noise in dreams.

Far and near and low and louder,
On the roads of earth go by,
Dear to friends and food for powder,
Soldiers marching all to die.

But those soldiers out there were no longer marching.

The acres of white were acres of little white crosses, and a signpost in a near-by bed of poppies named the rendezvous. *The Red Zone.*

"Killed," a voice behind Bill Shepherd pronounced somberly. "Two hundred thousand of them, *monsieur*. All of them killed."

BILL SHEPHERD turned with a start; that sermon-toned voice might have spoken out of the air. An old peasant had

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

approached him without making a sound.

Posed beside the car, he made a shadowy watcher in waning sunlight, bearded and weather-beaten. He was faded and bleached, and his dimmed eyes dreamed at the landscape. He might have been regarding Infinity, the shore the other side of Jordan. Bill Shepherd was a stranger, and the oldest inhabitant had paused to explain the Silent Land.

"All killed, you comprehend. All of them. All."

He spoke like the Last Survivor of a country whose population had passed away. His eyes musing, his head silver-haloed in sunshine like the hoary blossom of an autumn dandelion that might at any moment become detached and float away, the old man did not look quite mortal.

"Can you see them out there?" he quavered at Bill Shepherd. "Do you realize how many there are? *Non,* you do not, for I see you are young—you would not remember—you were not here. There are over two hundred thousand in the fields out there, *monsieur*. Over two hundred thousand—all killed."

"Do you remember them, *grandpère?*" Bill Shepherd asked. "Do you remember them, when they were here?"

He was afterward to recall how the faded eyes gave him a strange look. "When they were here?" Then, making a sweeping gesture with a bloodless, almost transparent hand, "But they are still here, *monsieur*. Still here. You can see them out there—those that never went home."

One arm outstretched, the old man wheeled and pointed like a creaky weathervane, naming off the villages and interlaced roads, pointing out the actions fought, identifying the regiments by number and name as a general might have conned that battle-front.

"I used to be a guide," he told Bill Shepherd. "The tourists who came here in the first years after the War, I would take them over these battlefields. They would steal the little flags from the graves and scatter picnic luncheons among the memorials. Today they prefer the Paris boulevards. They have forgotten the last War, preparing for the next. But I know that country out there by every *hectare*. I was here when the Germans arrived, and I was here to see the great Battle of the Somme when the British joined with the French to drive them out."

Eyes rheumed with the mists of reminiscence, he stared off across the sleeping landscape and droned on, describing the movements of the battle. Bill Shepherd listened. Some vague urgency kept tugging at the back of his thoughts, reminding him he had come here for another reason, but the old man's voice was part of a spell which seemed to be holding him, hat in hand, with the afternoon at a standstill.

"It was Nineteen-sixteen, the First of July," the old man was droning. "For a year the Allies had been bringing up their forces from the West. For a year those Germans on the eastern heights had been digging in. There had been little battles along this front, but the flatness of Picardy smothers a bit of rifle fire, and that morning of the First there was scarcely a sound. *Bleu!* All at once the British cannon let go; for thirty miles from here to the horizon it was like an earthquake. That was no ordinary barrage, *monsieur*. The big guns spoke in one continuous roar—all day—all night—a bombardment that lasted eight days. For eight days the British poured a tempest of steel at those eastern heights where you see the German line. Woods, hills, villages on that ridge were blown to atoms. Trenches were swept away as if by a giant broom. Ah, that was a terrible bombardment that began the Battle of the Somme."

"You saw it?" Bill Shepherd wondered.

"And have been half deaf ever since," the old man nodded. "My farm was on this highroad where we stand, and I watched it from here. For eight days I watched that bombardment, and then the curtain of fire was raised and the Allied advance began. Guns. Tanks. Lorries. Men. All those hundreds of regiments you see out there came streaming across those meadows like lines of ants. Can you picture that

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wonderful charge, *monsieur?* Look at them out there!"

THE old man pivoted and stretched a bony finger. "Observe those columns moving east. In places it was so clear I could see the British and French officers trotting at the heads of their assault troops. They carried those little villages you see below. They took the woods with running bayonet assaults, and swept the German outposts before them. *Non,* they walked right up to that bridge where you see the German line. And then—?"

The old man paused to shake his head, petting his beard with thin yellow fingers, his gaze wandering the farther slopes.

"And what then, *grandpère?*" Bill Shepherd asked.

"*Mon dieu!*" the old one rasped. "When the Allied charge reached that German line, that whole ridge burst into one sheet of solid flame. The slopes of this countryside are chalk, do you see?—and for a year those Boche invaders had been digging in like beavers. Those slopes they honeycombed with tunnels that go underground like coal mines. That whole ridge was an underground fortress.

"Our Maginot Line of today is nothing in comparison, for it was dug in a time of peace, and the Germans dug those tunnels under fire in our country at a time of war. They had passages fifty feet underground. Their cannon were hidden in the hillside. Out there you can still behold their famous *Wüuderwerke*—like an underground Gibraltar with deep corridors and concrete-walled galleries and cellars where the men were hidden. Ah, Fritz was snug down there, and save for those that went mad from the noise, that British barrage scarcely bothered the Boche at all.

"*Eh Bien,*" the old man continued after a head-shake, "our guns had smashed the German trenches, but they had not crushed the fortifications in those slopes. The Boches came out of their concrete holes like a million fiends out of Hell, and can you see how those armies on the lower fields were butchered? Can you see them flung back?—attacking again?—flung back once more?

"For days that battle continued. For weeks. Picardy, *monsieur,* became an ocean of smoke and flame. The Allied armies were waves dashing day after day against that eastern ridge. The German lines were gray rocks."

A fat bumblebee buzzed past Bill Shepherd's ankles, and there was a smell faintly flavored with clover in the air, but Bill Shepherd was not aware of a summer landscape.

"The killed," the old man whispered, "piled up like autumn leaves. Do you see that hill to the northward marked by the bronze statue of a caribou?—that is where an entire regiment from Newfoundland was wiped out in three hours.

"Off there toward Auchonvillers and Montauban the bodies lay so thick you could walk across them all the way to Belgium. Thousands of British. Thousands of French. Thousands of Germans. *Le bon dieu* alone could count the slain in that massacre.

"The battle went on and on. For weeks. For months. A terrible stench smothered the air. Those meadows out there were deserts. The smoke of the guns made a fog across the sun, their flames set fire to the nights, their roaring shook this Silent Land.

"The worst fighting of all was in this sector, here, called the Red Zone, between those villages you see yonder—Contalmaison and Thiepval. Five deep the slain were lying in those woods—do you see those woods at the end of that wagon-road down there?"

CONTALMAISON; Thiepval! Bill Shepherd came back into the present with an exclamation. The Château de Feu was located half way between Contalmaison and Triepval!

He followed the old man's pointing finger with his eye, fixed a stare on a dark patch of timber visible several miles beyond the rooftops of a distant village. Woods were noticeable in a landscape

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

where most of the timber had been swept away—such thickets as there were did not obtrude on the prairie-like vista—he discerned that that distant acreage of greenery must be second-growth.

So that was the Forêt de Feu!

He thought of Hugh somewhere out there among those silent multitudes, and with another mental recoil he was reminded of the office of Bertrand et Frer and the cryptic letter that had brought him out here from Paris. He could not help grimacing. *Ugly local reputation! Sinister occurrences!* Well, he could understand that real estate agent's letter now. One or two unexplained deaths! More like it if that agent had said one or two hundred thousand unexplained deaths! The whole countryside of Picardy was nothing but a vast graveyard. Centered in the heart of this No Man's Land of World War cemeteries and battlefield monuments, the *château* in that unrehabilitated forest must be something like one tomb in a necropolis.

He drew a sharp breath and tugged on his hat. If he wanted to reach the place before dark, he'd better get a move on. Twilight had come stealthily, coloring the air to burgundy, hazing the farther meadows. There was a hint of rain in the stillness. Blue-black clouds had overcast the east, their upper crests red-tinted.

"*Granpère,* I've got to be going. Can I give you a lift?"

"A thousand thanks, *monsieur,* but my cottage is just over the hill. You are wondering about the traffic? But this is a holiday, *monsieur.* The countryfolk have gone to celebrate. There is a fair at Guillemont."

He could hardly explain a feeling of relief; save for this old man, he had detected no sign of life in that sweeping vista, and he was somehow glad to learn that it was a holiday which had gathered the population elsewhere.

"Then I'll be driving on." He nodded. "It's almost dark, and I'll have to hurry. Tell me, *grandpère.* That wagon-road across the meadows, there—will that take me to the Forêt de Feu? I'm on my way to the Château de Feu."

And then came the words that were to whisper through his memory as he drove through the night-black woods where the dead man lay in the poppies behind him.

"The Forêt de Feu—!" The old Frenchman had rounded, aghast, his eyes grown to lakes of fright. "But I would not go into those woods at night, *monsieur!* For a million francs—for ten million, I would not go! Because the Forêt de Feu is in the Red Zone, *monsieur*—and the dead have not died in the Red Zone. The World War is not yet over, *monsieur.* The Battle of the Somme is still going on, and the soldiers who died in the Red Zone are still fighting it, and their front line is in the Forêt de Feu!"

CHAPTER V

BATTLEGROUND

THERE had been a rumble of thunder then. The light ebbed westward, and the sky in the east was dark. Bill Shepherd was aware of a sudden breeze against his face, a cool drop in the temperature. Poppies at the roadside were rustling.

"What do you mean by that, *grandpère?* The Battle of the Somme is still going on! The dead are still fighting it in the Forêt de Feu!"

Even as he spoke, then, the words had sounded ridiculous—there on that open highroad, his car parked close at hand.

"You can see those armies out there," the old man was pointing. "Armies of those killed in the Battle of the Somme. Armies of the dead, you will say. In their graves, you will say, and that battle was twenty-three years ago, and now all is quiet on the Western Front."

The old man shook his gauzy head. "But all is not so quiet on this front, *monsieur.* If you go out there among those monuments you will see the inscriptions in the stone—*These Dead Shall Never Die! C'est ça,* and that is the truth, *monsieur*—they have not died.

"Will you believe if I say those soldiers out there do not stay in their graves? Will you believe if I say they leave their graves

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

after dark and come to life across those battlefields? What if I tell you I have seen them, then—soldiers without arms or legs—officers torn to pieces—faceless horsemen flitting through the trees—those World War dead who rise at night to fight again. What if I tell you I have seen them, *monsieur,* still fighting the Battle of the Somme—!"

The old man was crazy, of course.

Bill murmured a kindly, "Yes, yes, *grandpère,* I'd like to hear more, but I've got to be going!" and started for his car. But the ancient gave a windy cry, and hooked him by the arm.

"*Monsieur* does not believe? *Monsieur* will not listen? But you are a stranger here, *monsieur.* You do not know the Forêt de Feu. That *château* where you are going is in the very heart of the Forêt de Feu. And those woods are in the heart of the Red Zone. The blood has never dried here in the Red Zone, I tell you. There was too much of it—too much blood!—and the dead—!"

Bill Shepherd said flatly, "Please, *grandpère,* I really haven't time to listen to your ghost stories—"

"Ghosts?" the old man cried. "Ghosts, you call them? Perhaps they are ghosts, indeed—the ghosts of the soldiers who were slain. None the less, I have seen them. It is said they come out of the poppies, *monsieur*—the poppies that have sprung up out of the soldiers' bones—the poppies that have in their veins the soldiers' blood! If you do not believe me, ask the inn keeper at Contalmaison. Ask the blacksmith in the valley. Ask Père Anselm, the curé in Thiepval Village—would a priest tell a lie? —*non,* but ask old Mother Landru at the very *château* where you say you are going!"

"Mother Landru?" Half way to the car, Bill Shepherd wheeled in dismay.

The old man nodded fiercely. "The soldiers leave their graves, I tell you. It is said the poppies breathe for them by day so they may rise and walk by night. I am not the only one who has seen them. Those others have seen them. And we who live here, on still nights we have heard the call of bugles—the echo of bugles where no bugles have been blown. We have heard gunfire, *monsieur,* where no guns have been since the War. We have seen the soldiers in the dark out there—the Poilus—the British Tommies—the Boches!"

SURE. A fog-wreathed hollow of any old battleground could be the gathering of a thousand spirits. Echo of some vagrant huntsman's horn became a ghostly taps. Thunderclaps at night made spectral artillery; swamp-lights shone as flickers in the hands of phantom signalmen; a wandering herd of cows created apparitional cavalry.

Bill Shepherd growled, "I must ask Madame Landru about these myths."

"Myths!" the old man glared. "Villagers found dead on the edge of those cursed woods out there—are they myths? A girl discovered with a bullet in her throat in that timber where the fighting was thickest —is that a myth? Is it a myth to find a child blown to pieces in a shellhole of twenty years ago?"

Something tightened in Bill Shepherd's throat. That letter from the Agency Honneteau, Carpentier et Jacques Gonjon had hinted at witchery like this. He thought aloud, "I suppose for the next fifty years they'll keep finding the remains of refugees killed around here during the War."

"The ones of whom I speak were not killed during the War," came the wheezy voice. "But last year they were killed. And the girl this spring. And the child only last month."

"Last month?" That was too recent for comfort.

"You can see it in the papers, *monsieur.* It happened not a mile from the Forêt de Feu. Some called it murder—a child killed in a crater where no feet but hers had walked. The police came and went, after scouring the fields; they did not know the answer. But we of this countryside know. We have seen the dead soldiers; heard the midnight guns. She was killed in the battle that is still going on—by the dead who

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have their front line in the Forêt de Feu—"

A black wing of cloud had extended across the eastern ridge, and the dusk was darkening. Bill Shepherd could barely discern the brown ribbon of the wagon-road that crossed the meadows below and dwindled in the direction of the woods. A drop of rain splashed on his wrist, and he turned to ask the old man a question; was startled to find himself at the roadside alone.

Rounding with in-pulled breath, he saw the graybeard some distance up the road, his back bowed under the wagon-pole, moving off in the dusk. He hurried to the car and busily put up the top. Then, stowed behind the wheel, he felt better.

He sent the Hisso charging down the highway, and when he came to the intersection of the dirt road, he turned deliberately off the macadam and took the wagon-track across the open fields. Apparently the road was little used, for the ruts were weedy, the car bumped and jounced and loose stones rattled under the fenders.

It skirted the village that he judged was Contalmaison, and sloped down into a valley shrubbed with willow. The car passed several new cottages that looked, however, as if they had been deserted; clattered over a plank bridge; curved around several granite monuments, and then began passing the fields of crosses. The road dipped along over the meadows, and the little white markers went by in a blur.

There would be a cemetery, then a field of weed or poppies, a coppice of young trees, another cemetery.

Bill Shepherd tried to keep his eye on the road-ruts, but the burial plots intruded on his consciousness at every turn.

The date had stopped here—he could read it on these monuments, 1916. He had driven back into the Past, to another Time.

NINE miles were gone on the dashboard meter when dark woods loomed suddenly ahead, and flanking the dirt road where it entered the woods he saw another regiment of crosses—Canadians. He slowed the car, wondering if his brother's grave could be among them. The evening queerly lightened.

There were five sharp thunder-explosions in the sky; a dash of rain struck the windshield; water fell in an opalescent cloudburst. Lightning played across the sky, and it was as if the whole landscape came into action; seen through sheets of rain all those far-flung battle lines were on the move, company after company advancing over the fields, sweeping down the slops converging on the woods ahead.

The illusion lasted only for that recurrence of twilight; as abruptly as it had broken, the cloudburst was over; rain dissolved into a drizzle and the deluged evening blotted into night.

Bill Shepherd snapped on his headlamps as he turned the Hisso into the road through the dripping, black trees, and he had not gone a mile on that woodland road before he regretted his decision.

This forest had known a blight. Masked by the greenery of saplings and aspen, its ruin had not been discernible from a distance; now Bill Shepherd found himself in a fire-blackened wilderness, an Aceldema of dead and shattered trees, thickets of fallen timber as dismal as a Georgia swamp. The undergrowth was a jungle in which charred and leafless trunks thrust out the stubs of amputated limbs.

Felled oaks lay along the roadside like prostrate giants. Everywhere the trees were down. There was a smell of earth and leaf-mold and rotting wood, as the road wound and struggled through that desolation of mangled timber. The headlights discovered in the underbrush an inconceivable litter of rubbish—wagon wheels, sandbags, scraps of twisted steel and punctured sheet-iron, wire stanchions, bits of charred harness, lengths of chain, snarls of barbed wire, bent iron stakes.

In a grove of shattered pine the junk of a rusted Howitzer stood like the bones of a dinosaur.

The old man's ghost story had not seemed too fantastic on that road in the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Forêt de Feu, and Bill Shepherd had been hunting for a place to turn around when he came on that peasant in the poppy bed—that dead man strangled by a murderer who had left no visible track.

CHAPTER VI

GIRL IN THE DARK

THE drizzle thinned into mist, and the road, as he drove in panic, grew worse. Underbrush and charred trees seemed to drift in weaving cobwebs of vapor; the road was befogged; and the car-lights dimmed, their yellow rays diffused by the sluggish steam.

Deliberately he slowed the car; forced his lungs to breathe normally. That dead man back there in the poppies couldn't hurt him, and whoever had killed that peasant would have hiked for cover long ago. Was he going to let an afternoon among War memorials and a crack-potted old man play on his nerves? He steadied his fingers and lit a cigarette and drew a sedative inhale of smoke.

These woods had belonged to his father, and his mother used to come here on European holidays. This was a private road. His road. He waved the cigarette.

As for that dead man, as soon as he reached the *château* he'd telephone the nearest *gendarmerie*. Murder would out. The killer's tracks, naturally, had been obliterated by that cloudburst, and the murderer had been smart—knowing the legend of the haunted poppies, he'd laid his victim out in a poppy bed, figuring to terrify any passersby.

Bill Shepherd felt better, bluffing himself into his normal frame of mind. The bluff became easier in proportion to the mileage between his car and that body back there. He turned on the car radio; should have thought of it before. The lighted dial brought him into the present and changed his mood. Give him a torch singer from Paris, and all the haunts would be dispelled.

But Paris was slurred, unintelligible with interference. Too much static for GBS. Holland and Belgium were off the air, and DXR Germany didn't come in. As he twiddled at the dial, the radio went dead. But he drove on, whistling tunelessly. Somehow, fiddling with the radio had given him back his confidence.

What a setting for a story all this would make. That dusty lawyer. This abandoned forest. Murdered peasant. Haunted countryside. Now if he were writing this thing, he would come pretty soon to a big limousine stuck in the mud. The plot needed a beautiful frightened girl.

Rounding a bend in the wagon-track, Bill Shepherd jammed the brakes in staring surprise.

There was the girl!

SHE stood in the ruts directly in the path of his headlamps, and her car was tilted in a ditch at the roadside. The car, an antiquated Citroen coupé, wasn't exactly a limousine, and the girl wasn't exactly beautiful or frightened; but, posed there in the mist with the night behind her and the mangled forest close around, she was certainly picturesque.

Her eyes were shiny black under the brim of a rain-soaked Leghorn hat, and Bill Shepherd saw pale determination in a tight-lipped face. She was young. A dark cape clung to her shoulders; her dress was moulded damply to her knees; her slim legs were notable, shapely in black silk. Her shoes were ankle-deep in the mire, and there was a blunt-nosed Mauser automatic in her hand. She aimed the gun at the Hisso's windshield, and Bill Shepherd snapped off the engine as he heard her cry of command.

"Get out!" The order was given in French.

He thought, "I'll be damned!" and got out.

"Come toward me. Advance with the hands in the air."

Arms uplifted, he moved toward her.

"Stand in front of your car-lights where I can see your face."

He obeyed, nerves tingling under the aim of the gun. Yet, oddly enough, he

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wasn't afraid of the girl. He had a vague feeling he'd seen her before. But she wasn't the woman he had seen that morning leaving the office of old Bertrand.

"Now," she said in a level voice, her dark eyes aimed with the same disconcerting directness of the gun, "who are you?"

"Funny," he told her in English, "I've been wondering that, myself."

A fierce little V came between her brows; then her firm lips spoke slowly, handling English with a husky accent. "Do not jest with me, *monsieur.* What are you doing in these woods? I demand your identity."

"Who am I? I wish I knew. I've spent years trying to find out."

"Don't be childish, please," the girl commanded sharply. "I am in deadly earnest."

"So am I," Bill Shepherd heard himself saying. "Shepherd's the name. William Shepherd. Call me Bill."

"What are you doing here?"

"Haven't you heard of me? Your failure to recognize my name and cry, 'Oh, where do you get your plots?' just proves how unknown I am. Well, I'm a writer. Author of *Footprints In The Dark* and *The Spider In The Easter Lily.*" He paused because mention of footprints reminded him of the poppy bed where they should have been. He pulled a breath, looking at the girl. "Anyway, that's what I used to do for a living, so save your time if you're after a generous pocketbook. She who steals my purse steals trash."

The girl said angrily, "I warn you, *monsieur,* I will shoot if—"

"It's in my right hand inner pocket, *mademoiselle,* but it isn't worth taking."

Under the dripping hatbrim her eyes went narrow. "I give you one more chance to explain who you are!"

He sighed, "Very well, I'll begin at the beginning. William Shepherd. Hundred and eighty pounds. White. American. Thirty-one. Unmarried. Does that tell you everything?"

"It does not tell me what you are doing in these woods."

"That's a long story, and I wasn't sure you'd be interested. It begins back in the States where I made my living writing stories. It's nice work if you can get it, as the saying goes, but one morning I woke up to find I was fed up with it."

He grinned at the blankness on her face, and was amused at an impulse to tell her something of the truth about himself. Talk relieved a tightness in his stomach, and the girl was becoming confused.

"Fed up means being sick of everything. To use a hackneyed term—tired of it all. A sense of personal futility, a feeling that nothing you've been up to was quite worthwhile. Do you understand?"

"I do not. Keep up the hands. Higher."

"I'll try to be lucid. My father was an unexpected genius who invented a gadget for coal mines and suddenly became an industrialist worth ten million dollars. My mother was—grand. My older brother, Hugh, signed up with the Canadians just after the *Lusitania*—believed in Democracy, good sportsmanship and Belgium's rights, and got blown to bits somewhere around here because of it."

Bill Shepherd shifted muddy feet, and eased his numbling shoulders, holding the girl's eyes with his own mocking gaze.

"That's the family tree. Good American oak. People who had faith in things and believed in what they were doing."

HE FROWNED at the ground, then, looking up, saw the girl's grip had tightened on the pistol. He went on hastily: "As for me, I tried to write the Great American Novel, but it all turned into a lot of words. I found I'd written hundreds of such words, so many blanks on paper. The only thing left for me to write was mystery stories."

"I want to know what you are doing here," the girl panted.

"I'm trying to tell you. I wrote a lot of mystery novels, and then got fed up. I wanted to see life, you might say. If words didn't mean anything, what did? I wanted to do something that meant something—do it seriously, zestfully, importantly. Any-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

way—I went broke. That's why I'm here in these woods. My father left me a French *château*. My Paris lawyer told me this morning the *château* isn't even saleable. He also hinted that this forest has an evil reputation, and an old man I met this afternoon on the road told me it's full of ghosts. He didn't say the ghost would be a charming girl waiting to meet me with a Mauser pistol to ask me what business I had in my own woods. I'm on my way to the Château de Feu."

"Château de Feu!" the girl breathed, watching him.

"And since this is my own land until the government confiscates it, I'm inclined to ask what *you* are doing here?"

Grabbing out, he caught her hand on the gun-butt, twisted, flung her around against the fender of his car, pinned her body with his hip, and levered her wrist upward until the pistol-muzzle touched the underside of her chin.

"Stand quiet!" he snapped, savagely authoritative. "Stand still, or that gun will blast your pretty head off. It's your turn, now, and begin at the beginning. Who are *you?*"

In the grip of his fingers her hand seemed tiny, but it required a bit of muscle to force her wrist. Tears welling to her eyes might have called for gentlemanly deference under other circumstances. She whispered, "Gabrielle. Gabrielle Gervais."

"Good," he nodded down at her. "I like the name Gabrielle. I hope I can like the French girl who answers to it. Hadn't you better relax now, and let go of that gun before it shoots somebody. Nice girls don't carry big guns," he mocked. "Or maybe it's just an old French custom."

She panted, "Please, *m'sieur*. I—I only wanted a ride."

"They thumb them in my country."

"I was not going to shoot you, *m'sieur*."

"You're the one I'm worrying about."

"*Monsieur*, you are hurting—"

"There!" The weapon dropped from her wrenched fingers, went *sluff* in the mud at his shoes. He stooped with a sigh, picked it up, stared at its calibre and stowed it into his side pocket. "You see this is private property, *mademoiselle*. No hunting allowed, at least from now on. Cigarette?"

She took one, staring ruefully at the mud where the gun had splashed.

Her eyes refused to look at him across the flaring match; he was only aware of dark lashes curled over hot-flushed cheeks and trembling disappointment on her mouth. She leaned back against the fender, rubbing her wrenched wrist, smoking, panting a little, blinking wet lashes.

"I told you, *m'sieur*. I—I only wanted a ride." Her chin puckered. "And I was lost, *m'sieur*. My car—you see it is off the road. In the mud. It is late at night and I—I was frightened."

Bill Shepherd grinned approval. The technique now called for an appeal to his masculine valor. Girl on lonely road in forest late at night. Lost and frightened. Didn't mean any harm with that 9-mm. automatic. Just a nice girl who had driven off the road and wanted a ride. If this ran true to form her next sentence would tell him she had no place to spend the night. This was Plot B, Angle 15-C. The follow-up on that would be an appeal to sex.

"I—I lost the main highroad to Guillemont—and I—I came through these woods on the wrong turning. In the rainstorm I went into that miserable ditch. *Oui*, I have been sitting there for an hour waiting for someone to come along. In the storm I did not dare walk off alone." She swallowed a sob. "You see the condition of my car, *m'sieur*."

NO FRAUD about that. The Citroën was badly mired. All the king's horses would have a job hauling it out of that bog. She said wistfully, "I was so happy to hear your motor coming, *m'sieur*. But then. I did not dare stop a strange car at night. I thought—I thought if I just showed the gun—why, the driver would not just go right by—and afterward I could explain—"

"You could explain you had no place to go for the night."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"How did you know that, *m'sieur?*"

"Your uncle turned you out of the house—"

"My uncle? *Non, non,* my uncles were killed in the War, *m'sieur.* It was my father—he—" She faced him in white alarm. "My father did not send you after me, *m'sieur?*"

He scowled. "Not exactly. But why did Papa Gervais—did I get the name?—turn you out? Did he say, 'Never darken my door again?' "

"He did not turn me out," the girl said fiercely. She stared off into the guttering boscage, pushed back a strand of hair from her cheek, faced him with a sigh of decision. "I suppose I must tell you, then. I was to be married this morning. It was all arranged. The cathedral at Amiens. The guests. The—the bridal veil. Hundreds of gifts. The wedding breakfast—"

"Ah." It almost made him uncomfortable. "Plot B, Angle 15. The wicked Duke. Handsome, dissipated, but very rich. You did not love him."

She looked at him sharply. Quickly rearranged an expression of appeal. *"M'sieur* the American understands, I see, something of the conventionalities of France. My father is most conventional, *m'sieur.* Most. He insisted I marry this man. *Non,* Philippe has not a title, but he is—how do you say?—stuffy. Horses. That is Philippe. All he ever thinks of. So it was not that I did not love Philippe—I could not have even become used to him—it was that Philippe did not love me. All he ever loved was horses."

"I see. A sportsman."

"Non, m'sieur. Un boucher. A dealer in the *Halles Centrales.* Steaks. Roasts for the butcher shops. Horse-meat, *m'sieur.*"

Bill Shepherd swallowed. "Ate his own nags, I suppose."

"So. But a man the most respectable. Terribly respectable. Rich. There is no better business in France. Only—"

He sighed for her, "There was someone else—"

"You mean—it was that I was in love with some other man?" She shook her head plaintively. *"Pas du tout!* Not that. Only I wanted some man to love me—not just marry me because it was time he married and we had known each other since childhood and my father was highly respectable." Her eyes looked up into his. "You understand?"

"Oh, sure."

"You believe?"

"Every word."

She held out a begging hand. "Then you will give me back my gun?"

"As soon as you tell me the truth."

Exasperation made her scowl. "But I have told you everything."

He said flatly, "Not quite. For instance, you said you ran away from a wedding this morning in Amiens. You drove all day and got lost. But you are only within half a day's drive of Amiens. Also your car has a license plate with a Paris number. Next, you didn't ask me for a ride when you stopped me, you demanded my name and future intentions. And lastly, do French girls running away from bridegrooms, even horsy ones, carry nine-millimeter automatics in their handbags?"

She threw down the cigarette, and faced him. Her manner changed. Her mouth was firm again. Her eyes were defiant. She shrugged, *"Eh bien.* Take me to the police."

He shook his head, thoughtfully looking toward her car.

Alarm in her voice was real. "You are not going to leave me—"

"No. It's going to rain again. I'd hardly leave you stuck in these woods; the wolf might come along. You were going to spend the night at grandmother's house—"

"I told you I had no place to spend the night."

He decided, "I can take you with me to the Château de Feu. You can telephone a taxi from there."

"M'sieur,"—she was smoothing her dress at the hips as she picked her way through puddles for the car—*"m'sieur* is too kind."

"Not at all, *mademoiselle.*" He unlimbered in the low leather seat, kicked the gears, twisted the wheel and eased the car

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to a purring start. A dead man on the road. A forest accursed. A haunted house ahead. A mysterious girl. Where did the plot go from here?

CHAPTER VII

THE FORGOTTEN OF GOD

HE COULD feel the girl's eyes on his profile, covertly studying, but when he switched his glance to catch her at it she was frowning at one mud-caked ankle, wriggling her foot in the shoe. The car slid in a greasy turn and splashed through wet grass, and he pulled it out of a stall just in time. Rain slashed in another cloudburst through the trees. Water trickled through leaks in the windshield cowling and spurted up between the floorboards. His elbow, negligent on the doorsill, was soaked.

He was wet and uncomfortable, and when he cranked up the window the car filled with steam and dampness and a smell of gasoline and cigarette smoke.

He was uneasy again. He drove in nervous caution, juggling the car in ruts of paste, listening to the violent rain beating the hood and roof and windshield, the splash of water coming down; straining his eyes to help the half-blinded headlights find the swamped wagon-track.

He knew he ought to be thinking fast, but he didn't quite know what he could do about anything, and for the next several minutes it wanted all his attention to keep the car floundering on its way. On a turn where the tires clawed furiously to keep going, he saw something loom up among black brushwood; something that looked like a tank left there to rot, and he would have stopped to examine it if the car wouldn't have sunk to the doors.

The road here seemed to be turning into quicksand; he raced the engine to get on. What a road this must have been during the War.

He could imagine troops moving up on a night like this. Not just one night, but night after night, night after night. Drowning in mud. Drowning in rain. Drowning under heavy packs. Drowning under terrors of shellfire. 10,000 men. 30,000 men. 100,000 men. Would he ever get those death-lists out of his mind?

He said aloud: "It makes me feel small."

The girl's voice asked, "What is that?"

He kept his eyes on the road ahead, annoyed that she was there. "You wouldn't understand." Angrily: "You're living on velvet, babe. I'm living on velvet. A whole lot of smart young people like us are living on velvet these days. When you think of all the men who died on some rotten road out here—died right here in these woods, suffering the tortures of the damned!—so that people like you and me could motor out here tonight and cut silly capers in comparative comfort—" he broke off for loss of words.

She said in a low voice, "You are a strange American, *m'sieur*."

He said: "Not so strange that I won't wring your neck if you try to snatch that gun out of my pocket. I don't mean to scare you. Self-preservation is the first law of life. What I can't understand is what induced all these soldiers to throw their lives away as they did. What nullified their instinct for self-preservation and induced them to come out here and die in droves like herds of butchered cattle?"

"They died for France," the girl said.

He snapped, "What did the Germans die for? The British? The Americans? What? For the Kaiser? For King and Country? For Democracy? Don't you see those are just a lot of words?"

"They are ideals," the girl said quietly. "I think the thousands who gave their lives in the World War did it because they thought it would make a better world for humanity to live in."

"Who's humanity?" he gestured impatiently. "Humanity, dear lady, is you and I. Well, do we thank those fellows who bled to death out here for us? We give them two minutes of silence every year on Armistice Day—is that gratitude? But today we're falling for the same old stock words and blah. Shouting the same empty phrases. Sharpening our weapons to make

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the same old mistakes. I don't wonder the peasants around here think these dead are turning over in their graves."

The girl beside him murmured, "You are funny. You are not quite sure what it is, but underneath you are angry about something."

Queer girl. She had something there: he *was* angry about something. Only, now that she spoke of it, he knew. Or thought he did.

He was talking to keep his mind off that corpse with the finger-printed throat. Queer how one corpse could be more frightening than a million. Millions blurred into impersonal mathematics—like the Chinese. You could only grasp little problems, like the problem of telephoning the police, and what to do with a French girl, and how to pay your taxes.

For the rest, you just kept jockeying a nervous wheel, watching a shiny road, breathing in a fetid compound of gasoline and cigarette smoke.

"And here we are!" he muttered as a dim gleam of lights developed in the mists ahead. "Welcome to the Château de Feu!"

HE FOUND himself turning the car up a muddy driveway hedged with thick undergrowth and the tall stumps of burnt trees. The car passed through broken gateposts guarded by two headless stone lions, and waded in gluey mire around a weed-grown terrace. He glimpsed the remains of what had once been a formal garden—overturned urns and ruptured statuary and a rubbish-filled fountain where the marble water nymph lay overthrown on her pedestal—and then, without realizing he had reached his destination, the car was under a shadowy porte-cochère.

He cut the engine, and climbed out. The place looked worse than he had pictured it.

Looming dark walls overgrown with vines, rank vines that clambered up the masonry like camouflage, weaving their arms around cornices and ledges, eating their way between the granite facing-blocks, climbing to the roof like jungle parasites, covering the windows. His eye followed the roof-line to the silhouette of a Norman tower; he made out dark bastions and a crumbled wing; but the building was wrapped in ivy and night, formless as a background in a dream, and the only light was a leak of yellow coming through a vine-screened lower window overlooking the drive.

Of course there was a recessed arch and a great door studded with iron bolts, and he knew there would be a knocker shaped like an iron fist clutching an iron ball. He let his flashlight play around the entry before knocking. A bicycle propped against a pillar under the porte-cochère was a surprise. He hadn't expected—and he was a little sorry to find somebody home: The bike looked new, and gave contrast to a scene of ruin and old desolation.

Listening to the echoes of the knocker, Bill Shepherd thought, "Wuthering Heights. Wuthering Heights as Edgar Allen Poe might have written it."

The girl climbed out of the car and stood in the entryway with him as he waited for an answer to the knocker. The mist changed suddenly to a sheeting downpour. Water blew in under the porte-cochère, drenching their shoes. The door took so long in opening that, when it did creak inward, Bill Shepherd was sure the man who opened it had first gone somewhere to make up in costume.

Or maybe it wasn't a man at all. Maybe it . . .

Bill Shepherd experienced a creep down his spine. The figure, dim in the doorframe, was too much like someone in masquerade. It was gaunt and tall and stooped, and it had a deep-furrowed sad gray face and great sad eyes that peered from under a forelock of salty gray hair. It wore a nightcap with a tassel that dangled over one ear, and a musty moth-eaten nightrobe that fell to the ankles. Its feet, in wooden shoes stuffed with straw, were like great clumpy hoofs, and, holding aloft a smudged oil lamp and peering out at Bill Shepherd, it was easily recognizable as a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

midnight version of a Walt Disney horse.

The melancholy eyes looked out at Bill Shepherd; and the man shook his head as if to say he would like to help, but he was too poor and the house was beyond the aid of a vacuum cleaner.

Bill Shepherd mustered his French. "You are Archambaud?"

"I am Archambaud."

"Then I suppose I won't have to spend the night on this doorstep in the rain. This is Mademoiselle Gervais. I am William Shepherd, and before we go any farther, has the place got a telephone?"

But Archambaud seemed unable to answer. Elevating the oil lamp, he stared at Bill Shepherd with eyes widened to saucers; then he wheeled back from the doorway, whinnying, "Blanche! Blanche—!"

Thrusting the girl over the threshold ahead of him, Bill Shepherd pushed in through the door. He had an impression of a vast, shadow-cornered room. The traditional staircase going up into darkness at the left. The traditional fireplace smouldering against a shadowed wall. The traditional stranger warming himself by the hearth.

The traditional stranger—with pipe, knickers and wet shoes—was obviously the story-book Englishman who had lost his way. Doubtless the owner of the bicycle. Everything was running true to form. The Englishman stood up, politely raising his brows. A dog barked viciously in a back room somewhere, and the in-gust of wind and rain fluttered the lamp-flame in Archambaud's hand and brightened the hearth-coals and made shadows creep and lengthen on the walls.

And now other shadows.

A woman's figure had formed in the glooms at the head of the staircase. This was in character, too. Dickens had written about her. Madame Defarge. Her knitting was in her hand as her felt slippers padded down the steps; in lamp light she was seen as a dowdy Amazon, six feet at least, with a combative bosom, capable jaw, faint moustache on upper lip, a head of hair like a bird's nest, and Bertrand's promised goiter—a growth that bulged from the side of her throat like a summer squash. She was waving her knitting, emitting hoarse bursts of indignant French.

"No, no, no! There is no more room for travelers. Sacred stove! Do they think this a hotel? Tell them this is not an inn, Archambaud! Tell them to go away! Are we at fault because of the eternal rain? Send them to the village! Send them—!"

Then, half way down the staircase, she saw Bill Shepherd; stopped short in her angry descent; dropped her knitting; screamed.

"Mother of heaven! The dead! The dead are calling upon us! The Forgotten of God!"

Doing an about face on the stairs, she fell deliberately over backwards, and came somersaulting down the steps, bumpety-bump!

Kidneys Must Remove Excess Acids

Help 15 Miles of Kidney Tubes Flush Out Poisonous Waste

If you have an excess of acid waste in your blood, your 15 miles of kidney tubes may be over-worked. These tiny filters and tubes are working day and night to help Nature rid your system of poisonous waste.

When functional kidney disorder permits poisonous matter to remain in the blood, you won't feel well. This may cause nagging backache, rheumatic pains, leg pains, loss of pep and energy, getting up nights, swelling, puffiness under the eyes, headaches and dizziness.

If you have trouble with frequent or scanty passages with smarting and burning, there may be something wrong with your kidneys or bladder.

Kidneys may need help the same as bowels, so ask your druggist for Doan's Pills, used successfully by millions for over 40 years. They give happy relief and will help the 15 miles of kidney tubes flush out poisonous waste from your blood. Get Doan's Pills.

(ADV.)

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMPLETE NOVELET

"The pain," Lolas said, "comes later"

Señor Sleight-of-Hand

In the charming Republic of Paraguaso they found it expedient to retire dictators by shotgun, to discuss business matters with the assistance of a rope. There was, however, a certain Scot who had an empty sleeve and an interesting change in method

By RICHARD BLAKER

I

IT WOULD have seemed, fifty years ago, that the Republic of Paraguaso recognized but one obligation on the part of its history towards humanity—that it should repeat itself. During its most lively phase, covering a period of thirty-six months, it saw the rise of forty-two and the fall (one way and another) of forty-one presidents. The discrepancy between the number of rises and the number of falls is accountable by the fact that the forty-second of those presidents is still president today; he is Esteban d'Aveiro, who assumed office fifty-five years ago.

Even on technically legal grounds his

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

position is unassailable because, after occupying it for ten or eleven years, he repealed the article in the Republic's Constitution which made it illegal for the same individual to hold the presidency for more than 33 months.

But even that was a long time ago.

Now, at some time during the month of August which His Excellency (this same Esteban d'Aveiro) invariably spends in Europe, he is fairly sure to be seen walking on Hampstead Heath with another elderly gentleman of the prosperously retired class—two amiable old buffers strolling out for the good of a wickedly fat cocker spaniel.

His Excellency's friend, one Mr. Fergusson (who is at the moment his host in one of the large detached houses on Haverstock Hill), seems a little less hale and sprightly than the president himself. His gait is not unlike the old cocker spaniel's; thoughtfulness gives the suspicion of a drag to his feet, or a slight dragging of his left foot as he walks gives him an air of thoughtfulness. In the socket between his right cheekbone and bushy white eyebrow there is no eyeball.

Tradesmen are always anxious to press some military rank or title upon this Mr. Fergusson, for in addition to the eyeless, bristling eyebrow he has a bristling moustache. But he has never been a soldier. He has merely knocked about—here and there.

Thus in the year 1884 Fergusson was in Paraguaso, seeking to acquire gold by the simplest and most direct known method—namely by digging it, in lumps, out of the ground.

It was not till the year following that he became aware of politics in that absurd country when he had been carrying about, for some weeks, two peculiarly heavy and rough knobs which looked very much like dirt. One was about the size of his fist and the other not much smaller than his head. They were both in his saddle-wallets.

He still had both his eyes at that time; from elbow to wrist his left coat-sleeve was empty. It was lifted out of the way and pinned up to his chest.

There was one man, and one only, in all Paraguaso to whom Fergusson had any wish to display the contents of his saddle-bags. This was young Esteban d'Aveiro, to whose father he had brought the only letter of introduction that had accompanied him to Paraguaso from Glasgow.

Now there were still some twenty miles between him and the d'Aveiro farm when he decided to unsaddle for a couple of hours beside a trickle of water in the dry bed that in a month would be a tumbling river.

In the course of a year's wandering about in search of gold he had got nowhere at all in an understanding of the Republic's politics; but he had got a very good grasp of the simpler and more obvious facts that did really matter. He had discovered, for example, that the average Paraguasan is far more impressed by a fist than by a knife or even a pistol. He knew also that the surest way to excite suspicion in the leisurely breast of this same average caballero was to show signs of any sort of hurry.

It was for this reason alone that he had loitered for useless hours at the tavern where he had slept, explaining that a devilish toothache forced him to cock his saddle and wallets up behind his head to keep the draught off. For this same reason he had accomplished no more than a dozen Paraguasan miles by noon.

The tavern had been infested, as all taverns had been since he had first begun to know them, by soldiers. Whether they were occupied at the moment in upholding the Sacred Government or overthrowing it he did not particularly care and had not noticed.

They jostled each other a good deal in the close quarters of the sleeping room, but they kept scrupulously clear of Fergusson and his saddle-bags by reason of the superstition connected with any sound man's contact with the stump of a mutilated limb.

That was okay to Fergusson.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AND now as he lay under the bush and smoked his cigarette his only immediate anxiety was to make the d'Aveiro farm before dark; for the night had a way of coming on like the sudden clapping of a lid over the bright interior of the country. He looked at his watch and saw that an hour's siesta would still allow him five hours for the remaining twenty miles of his journey.

After his siesta he had a shave and saddled up. When he had ridden for about an hour he noticed a shimmer of dust a couple of miles to the north. It was raised by more than one rider; and travelers in a party suggested the city. They would, at any rate, be able to confirm his geography and to report to friends they might meet later in the day that a one-armed foreigner they met was ambling towards Rocafumilla in no sort of hurry.

The party turned out to consist of six. Two were mounted on ragged horses, three were on mules, and one walked. They had stopped to wait for him.

When he was within twenty or thirty yards of them, one of them suddenly jerked and kicked his horse out of the group and snatched a double-barreled shotgun from a bucket of rawhide against his knee. This he very solemnly levelled in the direction of Fergusson's chest and said, "In the name of the president, His Excellency Ignacio Lolas, I command you to stand."

Fergusson immediately reined in. He swept off his hat to the absurd fellow and answered, "In the name of God, *caballero,* I for my part give you greeting."

"Hold up your hands," the shotgun idiot said very ill-naturedly.

"Your pardon, *caballero,*" said Fergusson; "not hands, but hand. I have one only." He replaced his hat and kept the hand up beside it.

"One knows that," said the other; "it is by that that I recognized you five hundred paces off. As soon as it was possible to see you I said to this litter of motherless dogs, 'It is he.' "

"He?" said Fergusson. "You would overwhelm me, *caballero,* with an undeserved recognition." But he kept his hand scrupulously raised. It was difficult to decide, all in a minute, which he disliked most—the two nostrils in the snout of the stumpy shotgun, or the very nasty eyes of the Paraguasan above and behind them.

He tried another line with the rascal. "There are more men than one in Paraguaso, my friend, whom ill fortune has bereft of an arm. If it is an enemy you seek, it is a pity that you should be detained by one who is altogether peaceable."

"We shall see," said Shotgun. "Dismount and give me your papers."

That was reasonable enough, and Fergusson dismounted, weighing the fellow carefully. Apparently he was not one of the casual, loafing, spare-time soldiers and loungers to be encountered at roadside taverns and farm outbuildings. In his squalor there was a certain battered elegance.

One of the other five could have been a native Indian; the others had the dull swarthiness of the nondescript *mestizo;* but this Johnnie with the blunt fowling-piece had the clear bronze skin that was the proud possession of none but the pure-bred Spanish-Paraguasan.

They had all been traveling for some time; the dismounted one among them had collapsed into a squatting posture in the sand, and was quietly cursing as he made some adjustments to the contraption of string and thongs that held a boot-sole to its upper.

From below the handkerchief under one man's hat there protruded a plug of rag and dried blood. A filthy bandage showed upon another man's chest under the frayed tinsel and green of his waistcoat. The get-up of all six had one detail in common—a narrow brassard of black and scarlet on the left forearm.

"Caballero," Fergusson said, "I perceive that you are soldiers. We have nought in common therefore, except mutual respect —and possibly a slight hospitality from a bottle I have in my haversack." Becoming

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a little more pompous, he added, "As you have no doubt guessed, I am a foreigner protected by the wider hospitality of nations."

He had been standing close beside his horse, leaning against the wallet that held the larger nugget, getting some vague sort of genial companionship out of the contact.

The Paraguasan noticed that a pistol-butt was sticking out of the holster in front of this wallet, and the discovery brought a jerk to his eyes and moustaches and the nostrils of his shotgun.

"Stand clear!" he snorted, and Fergusson shifted his weight on to both feet in compliance with the letter of the suggestion, if not altogether with the spirit of it. "And do not think of 'protection.' For enemies of the president, His Excellency Ignacio Lolas, there is no protection whatever and very short shift. An edict was made four days ago whereby there are no foreigners in Paraguaso now. All visitors have become citizens, and all citizens are soldiers of the Republic, or prisoners—condemned or awaiting trial. Since you are standing away from your arms, however, you may lower your hand."

II

"I THANK you, *caballero,*" said Fergusson, and took a nut from his pocket and cracked it between his teeth. "Even the new law, then, can give me no interest for you; since a man with only one arm would not make a soldier worthy of the Sacred Republic—or a worthy enemy."

"That," said the *caballero,* "is as it may be. But a man with no more than one arm may hold a weapon against His Excellency more dangerous than a knife or pistol. Such a weapon is friendship with Don José d'Aveiro and the young Señor Esteban." He made a beckoning gesture to his hearties. "We will therefore search your saddle wallets."

Fergusson was knocked nearly off his feet by the sudden plunge of his horse. "Beast and brute of hell!" he mumbled, steadying himself and setting his hat straight, as the horse galloped away.

The *caballero* gave a yell and brandished his gun to send his four mounted men loping after it. The pedestrian finished tying up his foot and ambled away after them.

Fergusson kicked himself for not having thought of calling this fellow *"Capitaz"* until one or two of his bravoes had done so as they scurried away after his nag. The animal had already got over its sudden fit of energy and was strolling back toward the four, who had themselves reined into a walk as soon as they saw that the strain of cantering was uncalled-for. But even so, Fergusson was going to have a devilish little time before they started fumbling with his wallets. The only plan that would occur to his mind was to start calling this fellow *"Capitaz"* without further delay.

He smiled and said, *"Señor Capitaz"*—and this, being constructive, was enough to give him a further idea.

"It would be as well that you alone should know what is in those saddle-wallets. What is amply sufficient for one high-born *caballero* would be nothing if it were shared by half a dozen. Therefore command them to leave the wallets unopened. In the meantime let them wait where they are, so that we may converse, you and I, as one gentleman to another."

The *capitaz* said, "You have performed one trick already—that of sticking a nutshell into your horse's flank while we talked."

"But that is the only trick I know, *Capitaz,*" and Fergusson tried to melt the fellow with a boyish grin. It got him nowhere. The *capitaz* went on nursing his shotgun with an increased sulkiness. "What have you in those wallets?" he asked.

Fergusson said, "Gold."

This was not part of a plan, because he had no plan. He said it because all the fellows had to do was to go and pull a couple of shirts and a few socks out of the wallets and see; and this he was likely to do at any moment. "Gold. And

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the only matter of immediate importance is that your trusties should remain unaware of this. But I would have news of Esteban d'Aveiro, who is my friend."

"You admit it?" exclaimed the soldier.

Fergusson's pride carried him further. "His father, the Don José, also."

"They are rebels and the worst enemies of His Excellency, Lolas. They have raised a party, calling it 'The Voice of the Children'—*mestizos* and natives and God knows what other pestilence and scum. The d'Aveiro hacienda is the headquarters of an army. It is the only spot in the country as yet unsubdued. But the president will be glad to hear your secrets, since you were returning to the old Don from the interior."

"But I have no secrets," said Fergusson, "except the one you do me the honour of sharing with me. The gold."

The *capitaz* shrugged his shoulders. "The president has peculiar and great powers of persuasion. Many young men have grown suddenly old in examinations by His Excellency. Others—not to put too fine a point upon it—have died."

"And what is your reward, *capitaz,* for service to such a man?"

"Ultimately," said the other, "the portfolio of War and Internal Communications."

The *capitaz* went on very solemnly, "The Don d'Aveiro thinks and dreams only of his cattle, in the manner of an imbecile. Through all his life he would sooner have bred one perfect colt than sold a thousand indifferent ones at a handsome profit. The son goes the same way, with his lofty words and oily gentle deeds among those accursed 'Children.'"

"They are good, true men," suggested Fergusson.

"Good, true men with empty pockets," said the *capitaz,* "are as useful to a soldier as a good, true rifle with an empty breach." He spat.

"It is true they *had* very little gold," said Fergusson; "but I have been in this country now over a year."

"So you bring gold to this country?" This was not altogether a sneer, and Fergusson treated it if it were not a sneer at all.

"No," he said; "for in my country there is a saying that we do not carry coals to Newcastle. I brought no gold with me. All I did bring was a letter to Don José. Since delivering that letter I have traveled far and wide in the swamps and marshes. There, as you see, I lost an arm in an encounter with Indians; but I have found thirty-eight streams and have recorded their courses upon a map. They are considerably alike, all these streams and their tributaries. One differs from all the others, however—although this difference does not appear on the map. Its banks are composed, not of dirt, but of gold."

"BRING me that horse, one of you," the *capitaz* shouted to his men. He took the reins from the pedestrian of the troop who brought the horse to him, and handed over the shotgun in exchange. "Let off both barrels," he said, "at his stomach if he should give any occasion. If you aim at his head half the charge would be wasted in the air."

He led Fergusson's horse aside and leaned over in the saddle to examine the wallets. He fished out a towel, shirts, socks, shaving-tackle, and then stopped—staring and gaping into the depths of the wallet, and mumbling. He started to bundle the oddments back again, hurried, and pulled him together.

"Ha!" he shouted in triumph to Fergusson, loud enough for all to hear. "I have *found* it, my good *señor.*" With great ostentation he stuffed a pair of socks and Fergusson's razor-strop into his immense pocket, and buckled up the wallets.

He dismounted from his own horse as soon as he got back to Fergusson and tossed the reins to the sentry. "My mount is somewhat jaded, *señor.* I shall therefore take yours. It is fair plunder."

So saying, he scrambled into Fergusson's saddle and snuggled his knees against the wallets. He recovered the shotgun from the sentry, and sent him ambling away.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When he was sufficiently out of earshot he said to Fergusson, "That change of horses—I owe it to my rank and station, before my men, to take the best."

"Perfectly, *capitaz,*" said Fergusson, "it is all one to me. Those pieces of gold are as safely mine against your knees as they were against my own. As you very well know, I have only to tell those rascals—"

The *capitaz* leaned forward towards Fergusson. There was a sudden glint in his smoky eyes, like the edge of a knife-blade.

"Señor!" he said eagerly, "when men speak of gold—as when they speak of women—they speak as man to man, with hearts widely open. Regard me then, I have here a weapon that easily blows the entrails from an ox at a dozen paces. Any mention to those men. . . . Is my meaning clear, *señor?"*

"Clear as the brightest of mornings," said Fergusson.

"Good. You will mount my horse presently, and will ride some five paces in front of me. In advance of us both will ride the men."

This seemed to indicate that they were ready to move off immediately, but the *capitaz* was obviously reluctant to do this. He looked uneasily towards the men, who seemed to be sinking into sleep as they sat their miserable nags, and jerking themselves out of it again because of some unresting suspicion that haunted them.

He slyly undid the wallet buckles and dipped a hand in, to rummage through the loose kit till his fingers could feel what lay at the bottom. A sort of driveling croon came from him. "Ai—Ai—Ai."

Feeling the gold, the *capitaz* was perplexed. Only two thoughts finally crystalized sharply out of the many that tumbled about under his sweltering hat. One was of an alliance between this one-armed wizard and His Excellency the President. The other was of an alliance between him and young d'Aveiro. Of the two, the first was a shade less repulsive than the second. He therefore said, lugubriously enough, "It is time that we return."

A shout woke the men from their sleep or stupor and brought them over. Fergusson mounted his captor's horse. A nod set the men moving ahead, the pedestrian shuffling along behind them. Fergusson kept a few paces behind him. He wanted to keep an eye on the *capitaz,* for he did not put it past the fellow to drop those confounded nuggets in the sand very quietly, in the hope of coming back for them, by candle-light.

But the *capitaz* only meditated, crooned and sometimes swore—till he was suddenly seized by a wild fit. He cocked both hammers of his gun, stabbed his horse forward in a plunge and reined it back on its haunches abreast of Fergusson. The muzzle of the piece was against our hero's floating ribs. "Dog!" he jibbered, "why do I not blow your vitals to the sky? These two would at least be mine. But why? Tell me that."

"Capitaz," said Fergusson, "I do not know. But my stomach is withered with fear that you will. Your hand is shaking on those triggers so that I can scarcely bear to look at it. But there is a parable concerning a goose that laid golden eggs. It is a tale to bring a tear to any eye."

The muzzle still kept jabbing against his ribs; and he found that his little speech about his stomach had expressed its condition with great accuracy. "Sooner or later," the *capitaz* snarled, "the secret will be dragged from you. For no man—no *living* man—has yet left the president's audience-chamber without disclosing whatever is asked of him. Therefore tell me now—and I alone need know it—from which of the thirty-eight streams you have filched these two pieces."

Fergusson slowly shook his head. *"Señor Capitaz,"* he said, "how can such a thing be told by word of mouth? It is true that I have made a map; but I am not a skilled maker of maps, nor are you a skilled reader of them. And so it becomes a matter of the greatest importance that you preserve my life with the utmost care and forethought. With your fowling-piece arranged as it now is, one jolt of your

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hand against your saddle-pommel . . . For it is I alone who can lead you to that stream . . . . Ah." And he drew a very deep breath of relief as he saw the broad, dirty thumb of the *capitaz* slowly letting down the hammers of the gun.

The *capitaz* lodged no objection to his reining in a little, to clear his ribs of the muzzle, as the second one came down. "I thank you. We can now talk again of gold—as you remarked so sagaciously that men talk of a woman—as man to man."

"Since you are to be left alive," said the *capitaz,* and although the thought was obviously not too palatable, he accepted it as a fact without undue ill-humour, "it is best that I take you, for five minutes, to the president."

AS THEY rode, the *capitaz* spoke feelingly of recent historical events in the city. The current Excellency, Ignacio Lolas, had been in the presidential chair for a fortnight and three days. The withdrawal of his predecessor from politics and other early matters was caused by the pulling of both triggers simultaneously, by the *capitaz* himself (who was then but a corporal) of the shotgun which he had now very amiably laid across his saddle . . . .

It was not much after seven when they were challenged and saluted and allowed to pass into the city.

The *capitaz* changed his tone from one of general bragging to mild apology: seventeen days had been insufficient time, what with one thing and another, to set the presidency in order for the new government.

Affairs, therefore, were being conducted in one of the commercial buildings in the old part of the city—the warehouse, in fact, where His Excellency Ignacio Lolas had conducted a very successful business as an importer and distributor of hardware before his assumption of office.

At the gateway to a paved courtyard they held their horses to allow a large cart to pass out. The troopers and their commander crossed themselves. The hair under Fergusson's hat made a disturbing movement and there was a sudden feeling of squalid emptiness inside him.

At the far end of the courtyard, lit by lanterns and a couple of paraffin flares stuck in the wall, was another cart. Two planks rested on its tail from the ground, like a ramp used for rolling beer-barrels from a dray.

Soldiers, tired to the point of apathy and bored beyond words, were shoving long untidy bundles up this slope and into the cart. The bundles had not the absolute rigidity of hardware. They were done up in the waste from a busy and prosperous emporium—in sacks, bits of matting, brown paper remnants of oilcloth; finished, like mummies, with a lavish expenditure of string.

"Capitaz," Fergusson whispered, "those gold-lumps are yours if you will let me—let me just *go.* I'll take my own chance outside."

The suggestion, and the manner of it, surprised the *capitaz;* for he had not expected panic from the *caballero* who had not sweated unduly when a weapon beyond compare had been suddenly pushed against his ribs.

He did not understand, this good soldier of the new Sacred Republic, that fear is not the only sensation that can be produced inside a man by the sight of a heap of long, softish bundles being wearily shoved up an improvised ramp and bumped with a succession of dull thuds to the bottom of a cart.

Sheer panic was the only way the *capitaz* could account for this surprising offer; and panic was connected in his experience with immediate flight. He therefore jerked his fowling-piece into life again; but the tone in which he answered had a new kindliness.

"No, *caballero.* We are watched now by a thousand eyes. But something may still be done. We will talk—privately, as man to man—before you see the president."

He dismounted with obvious reluctance from Fergusson's saddle and wallets. Beginning to unbuckle the girth with his own

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hands, he cursed back the orderly who lounged out of the doorway to perform this office for his commander. "Attend the prisoner," he said.

"I am maimed, my son," Fergusson said, quietly, to avoid any unnecessary manhandling. The fellow gaped at the empty coatsleeve, crossed himself, cocked his Snider and yawned. He, like all the others whom Fergusson had yet seen, was utterly exhausted.

The *capitaz*, however, seemed to be stimulated into sprightliness by the immense load of the saddle. He managed it with the deftness of a parson with a baby at a christening—keeping hold, at the same time, of his gun.

Fergusson followed him down a cloister-like corridor and through a door which a sentry—yet another somnambulist—opened for them.

III

INSIDE the room was one who was not, like all the others, dead with sleep and dirty. It was a sprucely uniformed young man, seated at a desk.

"Good, Ambato," said the *capitaz*. In his tone were condescension, geniality, confidence, and a command.

"Good, my *Capitaz*. So you have brought something?"

"I have brought that one-armed visitor of whom there has been some talk. There was no bloodshed. I am about to question him."

The staff officer glanced, not unamiably, at Fergusson, and then at his captain, festooned with Fergusson's stirrup-leathers and irons, girth-straps and wallets.

"I will have the saddle taken away; we will examine the prisoner," the young staff officer said.

The *capitaz* became impatient. "You have not understood, Ambato. I examine this one—alone."

"I understand *now, capitaz,*" the other said blithely but knowingly. He flicked his papers into order on the desk, put down his pen, lighted a cigarette, and went out.

The *capitaz* laid the gun and the saddle on top of all the beautifully arranged papers on the desk, and picked up a pistol from beside the inkpot. Then he walked over to the door, bolted it, and hung his hat upon the key.

Near a small niche containing the painted image of a saint, he rapped on the wall with the pistol-butt. Fergusson saw a movement behind the image—two rifle-muzzles being withdrawn through little slits. The *capitaz* shifted a large calendar from one nail to another, thus covering up the recess with the saint.

"Now," he said, "we are alone, and may talk freely, though not too loud. First, however—" and he went back to the desk. Shifting the pistol from one hand to the other while he worked, he took out the nuggets and laid them on the desk.

Fergusson, seeing that there was a chair quite near him, sat down. His movement swung the *capitaz* away from the nuggets. As soon as he saw exactly what it was that had happened, he said, "Ah, your pardon, *señor!* I had forgotten that you are, perhaps, fatigued."

He poured some water into a glass from a pitcher on the table and added some rum. Without a thought for himself he handed this to Fergusson, and Fergusson said, "Your good health, *señor.*"

The *capitaz* nodded, too busy even to smile. He pushed the lamp across the desk and brought the chair round, to save it on the sade side as the nuggets and Fergusson.

Very much in the manner of a buyer considering samples, he sat down, sideways-on to the desk and the nuggets, and facing the traveler. But his eyes could not remain long anywhere but upon the gleam in those shapeless and yet most lovely torments at his elbow.

Soon his hands and the muscles grew quite still. Affairs of state were forgotten. Fergusson was forgotten. The pistol itself was forgotten, hanging beside him in fingers utterly lifeless. And Fergusson was thinking.

One-handed as he was, he could have

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

grabbed that pistol and shot the fellow while he still dreamed his dribbling dreams. Alternatively, since even loud speech was likely to be heard through the door, or through the rifle-slits behind the saint, he could have rapped him over the head with the pistol's butt—and been, moreover, one cartridge to the good. But what then?

Those ruffians outside might be done up with fatigue and the monotony of butchery—dead and done to the wide world; but they could spring to nimble life again like cats. The making of any plans, in the circumstances, was a flat impossibility.

He finished his rum and water. The *capitaz* barely stirred at his movement. His dream went on, disturbed only as by the movement of an insect.

"*Capitaz,*" Fergusson gently roused him, "you omit to talk."

The visionary and dreamer forced his thoughts into business. "In a word, what is your price?"

"For those two nuggets, my safe conduct to the Hacienda d'Aveiro."

"Fool, fool, fool." The *capitaz* was speaking from the depths of his heart, without any rancour or bitterness. "Of what use are these two alone? It is your price for telling me where they came from that I want to know. If it is reasonable I will pay it. Consider this also; you and I, *señor,* with gold at our disposal, could go far. The man Lolas is well enough—in a measure. He has gold, but not as much gold as would form the banks of a river; not as much as you and I. And d'Aveiro and his sons. Myself, I have no particular animosity towards them; but this Lolas. . . ."

A SUDDEN din of shuffling and scraping and of resounding, heavily booted footfalls in the corridor stopped him short. Immediately upon it came a banging on the door, a trying of the handle and a roar. "What in hell's name—"

"Immediately, Excellency, immediately," the *capitaz* whimpered, having already let the pistol drop to the floor. "You," he whispered to Fergusson, "you have the immediate kindness to open for him while I—" In a flash he whisked the nuggets from the desk, wrapped them in his cloak, and jumped behind the desk to thrust it into the knee-hole.

Fergusson took the hat off the key and tossed it to the desk. He unlocked the door, opened it and stood aside for the president to enter.

Fergusson had thought, earlier in the day, that the snout of a shotgun was ugly. Soon after this he had thought that the eyes and nose, moustaches and unshaven jowls of a *capitaz* of rifles were ugly. But these were lilies of the field compared with his Excellency, Ignacio Lolas.

The president was as tall as Fergusson. His paunch was a great tub, but it did nothing to impair a natural litheness and agility. A broad belt under it contained the sheath of a knife, and a pistol of the latest American pattern. Emeralds sparkled in the heels of his boots, under enormous silver spurs. A long dark cloak, fastened at the throat by a heavy silver chain, fell away from his elbows as he stood with his hands on his hips to glance, carelessly at Fergusson and contemptuously at the *capitaz.*

He had been picking his teeth as he came in, and left the toothpick stuck between bicuspid and molar so as to give an added fatness to his lower lip, which was—in repose—the shape of a slug. On his head was a Napoleonic sort of hat, crested with cock's feathers.

The *capitaz,* standing by the desk, cleared his throat and said, "I—I was about to bring before you a prisoner, Excellency."

"Damn the prisoner," His Excellency said very shortly. "It is with you that I propose to have a few words."

The *capitaz* jumped at this. "I will dismiss him to the guard," he said with great alacrity, and shot a quick glance at Fergusson of which he did not quite get, or else did not altogether like, the meaning.

"Well, in God's name dismiss him, then," said His Excellency. "Since when does a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

capitaz require a week's thought for the dismissing of a prisoner?" At the prisoner himself he would not deign to look.

The idea of those two getting together quietly behind a closed door was rather more than Fergusson could comfortably accept.

In all modesty (coyness almost) he said, "Pardon me, Excellency. First I would hand to you a small present which your good *capitaz* has had the forethought to conceal for you under the desk. I have brought it a long way."

The president now turned to him and looked him carefully up and down. When he had taken in his one arm he turned again to the *capitaz,* with a new dirty look. He withdrew the toothpick by an ingenious movement of his lips and ejected it to the floor. "So," he said. And again, "So. The good *capitaz* had it in his mind to keep this partner to himself, did he? His one-armed visitor who is known to be the dearest friend of Esteban d'Aveiro?"

"Excellency," said the *capitaz;* "those louts outside told me that you were—out. The *señor* here heard them—not one only, but three of them. I swear it. What else could I do with so valuable a prisoner but keep him for you myself?"

"Likewise his present?" sneered the president.

The *capitaz* did not answer. He stooped and hesitated not an instant before straightening up again and placing on the desk the smaller of the two nuggets.

"Yes, Excellency," he said, "I was personally guarding the present also."

FERGUSSON'S choice between these two beauties now took a slight swerve towards the greater of them who was now gaping, like a stunned idiot, at the nugget. "Excellency," he said quietly, "refrain from thanking me until you have seen the other one."

A glance from the *capitaz* gave him a passing feeling of thankfulness that the old shotgun was under the saddle, and the pistol lying on the floor on the near side of the desk.

"What?" said the president. But the *capitaz* had already said proudly; "Yes, Excellency; behold *this* one," and was lifting it slowly from the floor. It was painful to watch him. Drawing out one of his teeth could not have hurt him more.

The president walked over to the desk and took the nuggets. As if they were cocoanuts fairly won at a shy he tucked them under his cloak, between a forearm and his stomach. Then he went back to the door and opened it.

"Where is the corporal?" he asked, and the corporal immediately appeared. "Take this late *capitaz* and keep him for me till morning." With his free hand he drew an immense gold watch from his pocket and frowned at it. "For you," he said to Fergusson, "I have five minutes. Come."

The descent of a dozen steps at the end of the corridor told Fergusson that the president's audience chamber was a cellar. Across the whole width of it was a low girder over which were looped a couple of hide lariats.

"Well, yes. Perhaps it would be as well," the president said in casual answer to a gesture from a fellow who lounged against the wall in the capacity of some sort of orderly.

The orderly took the end of one of the lariats and shifted over to Fergusson turned his left side towards him, and the fellow stopped short. "Ex—Excellency," he mumbled: "would you—how—a—mutilated man . . . the curse . . ."

"Do the other one, you fool," said the president. "There is no need to touch the stump."

The orderly kept what distance he could while binding Fergusson's wrist to the lariat's end. Then he pulled on the end looped over the girder till the prisoner's arm was drawn up taut. Then he tied the end to a ring in the floor.

The president said morosely, "That last one you did that way made an unbearable din with the shuffling of his feet. Fasten this one's about an arm's length apart. There is my staff in the corner."

To the president's handsome walking

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stick of ebony the orderly now bound Fergusson's ankles, one near each end of the stick, so that his toes barely touched the ground now.

He saluted and was going out, when the president remembered something and said, "Oh—my horse. Tell them to have it ready at the gate in five minutes. And a rifleman to accompany me on a ride."

When the orderly had gone, His Excellency went out and shut the door at the end of the small entrance passage. Within this he shut another one, so that the door of the cellar itself was the third between them and the outside world. This one he locked.

He flung his cloak on the table, placed the nuggets on the cloak, and sat down on the table-edge. The muzzle of the revolver in his belt was pushed, by his paunch, uncomfortably into his thigh; so he drew it out and laid it beside the nuggets. Sitting upright on a hard chair seemed to disturb the distribution of his bulk altogether. His long, handsome tunic obviously pinched him across the chest and shoulders and under the arms. He took it off and disposed it carefully over the back of his chair before sitting down again.

After staring for some time at the nuggets with an absorption as complete as the *capitaz'*, but with a peculiar glimmer of intelligence in his stare, he turned to Fergusson and began to speak.

IV

"THIS, *señor*, is the fulfillment of a wish of mine. Somewhere over a year ago you came into my shop to buy a waterproof coat. Selling you the coat, I remember that I wished you good luck. Here it is. But you, no doubt, have forgotten the incident and my good wishes, for you did not speak the language as you speak it now."

"I remember the incident very well," said Fergusson; and he did. He recognised the widely spaced teeth and the sparse hair on the upper lip; the high cheekbones, slanting eyes and peculiarly yellow swarthiness that made him wonder how a Mongolian-Tartar should have turned up in that part of the world with the magnificance of such a shop and the name of Lolas. "But I must confess I had forgotten your kind wishes in the discomfort of my present posture."

"Ah," said the well-wisher. "In important discussions of this nature it is necessary that my thoughts are undisturbed by any anxiety for my safety. But you need have no fear. It remains mere discomfort for some considerable time. It is only after several hours that it becomes positive pain. In the chest, mostly. . . .

"But on the occasion of your first visit to me, you showed great curiosity for the d'Aveiro family; and you had not then met the daughter. According to report, you have not been disappointed as to this family's worthiness of your friendship."

"My movements seem to have been very closely observed," said Fergusson. "Is the same attention given to all the many foreigners trying to make a living in your country?"

"By no means," said the president. "I have had you watched carefully, solely because of your friendship with Don José and his son. It has taken me many years of planning to become president: and for just as many years I have known the importance of the d'Aveiro family. For a long time I attempted to make friends with it. My plan now is to—to do otherwise. It is lucky for you that you were intercepted before you were able to reach them and confuse your destiny with theirs. It is lucky also that you were not drawn into any pact with the fellow Brosso, the *capitaz*. He has failed at the first test."

"His conversion was not so entertaining as your Excellency's," said Fergusson; "but since you have ordered your horse I wonder that you do not come more directly to the point—whatever it is."

The confounded lariat was beginning to cut into his wrist and there was already a little twinge of pain between his shoulder-blades.

"To tell you the truth," said the presi-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dent, "I did not think that you would be willing to talk—business—much before morning. A man who goes alone into the swamps and river-beds of the *Infieles* and loses an arm and comes out and buys fresh provisions and a few more cartridges and then goes straight back again did not seem likely to be broken by five minutes of the strap. I had estimated eight or ten hours."

"But there is no reason for not telling me what it is you require. You have my gold already; and, as a soldier, the *Infieles* have made me useless."

"What I require," said His Excellency, "—as you well know—is the knowledge where those nuggets come from."

Fergusson had been afraid of that, but he scarcely showed it.

"But how are we to know that they are not the only two?" asked Fergusson. "I saw no others."

The president grinned. "By morning you will have seen many others; and you will remember exactly where."

This sounded, not to put too fine a point upon it, bad. If two minutes could make a wrist and a chest feel the way Fergusson's were beginning to feel, a night and the morning formed a thought most unattractive. The cellar was filthily stuffy, for all its bright furnishings, and the drawing of a decently deep breath hinted that the point of a knife was somewhere near the pit of Fergusson's stomach.

"You forget," the president went on, "or perhaps you did not know that I myself have spent some time, many years ago, in that same country of the *Infieles*. I found a little stream that was banked—*señor,* it was banked, I tell you—with the same gold of which you have been kind enough to give me these two pieces. What did I do but that which alone I could do? The two colleagues who were with me died"—he stroked his chin—"died of fever, *señor*. I brought back all the gold I could carry. In the course of time, so that no one need suspect me of any object in hurrying, I went back again."

"Then what, in God's name," said Fergusson, "do you want of me?"

"Holy Republic!" exclaimed the president, shocked into incredulity, "the man is a dolt! He does not understand! Fool, I could not find that cursed stream again."

A SMILE that would approach anywhere near to expressing Fergusson's natural feeling brought two minute stabs of pain behind his jawbone, under his ears. So he said very solemnly, "That is easily adjusted, Excellency. There is a map with every stream marked out in my wallet. I will indicate the one from which I brought that gold."

The president shook his head. "You underestimate me in a most surprising manner. Reconsider: I am Ignacio Lolas. I came to Paraguaso as a stowaway and am now president of the Sacred Republic. Such a destiny is the work of sagacity . . . . But of what use would be even an honest map to me? Of what use *was* an honest map? I will tell you. None. For I had one, and have it still. It was made by one of my colleagues, before he died. I myself marked the stream with the gold. But even with that map I could not find it. No, *señor;* what I require is that you yourself should guide me, or my emissaries, to the spot."

He smiled at Fergusson as if he was demanding the most reasonable service in the world.

"Oh," said Fergusson: "I see. But since you are so sagacious, how do you know that after I had said I would lead you truly I *would* lead you truly, instead of to death—by fever—among the *Infieles;* or to another stream as innocent of gold as you yourself are of the mysterious craft of map-reading?"

The president smiled. "My friend," he said, "a man who has once been broken by me, remains broken. Alternatively, he can be broken again with considerable ease. For example" —he picked up the revolver from beside the nuggets—"for example, I am a very fine marksman. Seated here, or a dozen paces further away, I could perform a very neat surgical operation upon you. Or I could, if you kept still, remove

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the lobe of an ear without disturbing a hair of your whiskers."

He toyed artistically with the weapon before putting it down again and picking up the nuggets.

"And if I will not even say that I will do it?" asked Fergusson.

The president shrugged his broad shoulders. "In practice, *señor,* it has not yet been necessary for me to consider such an alternative. While I am gone my man will come in and stay with you. He is a talkative fellow, and will tell you many things."

"You place me in a delicate position, Excellency Lolas," said Fergusson. "I feel so hearty a dislike for yourself, and all whom I have so far seen of your emissaries, that I am obliged to say, quite flatly, no."

If there were any Calvinist ancestors in Fergusson's lineage, they it must be who dictated the iron coldness of his blunt and unemotional refusal.

"By consenting now," the president said, rather sadly, "you would travel as a robust young man. By procrastinating, even until morning, you run the risk of becoming an ailing cripple. A young doctor from Europe once told me that that position is somewhat of a strain on the heart."

He started to move away from the table with the nuggets; but suddenly startled by a thought, he put them down again and whistled. "*Señor,* a message must be conveyed this very night to the d'Aveiro people, telling them that you are in my hands. If there is any truth in what has been suggested to me concerning yourself and the girl—well, well, well. It will assist them greatly in making up their minds concerning a certain proposition I have put forward to them."

"Don José d'Aveiro make a bargain with you!" Fergusson exclaimed. "You?"

The president chuckled. "All men," he said, "are now as frightened of me as you are." He picked up the gold again. "But I must go now, to an appointment. You have given me, here, your proudest possession. I will show you mine."

In the manner of a small boy about to show off some new toy, he waved his free hand toward the wall farthest from the door. "That is a wall, you say. But regard me!"

HE DID something to one of the bricks and it came out in his hand, showing itself to be not a real brick at all but an ingenious dummy of a brick's face. He next manipulated something in the cavity left by the removal of the dummy, and a section of the wall swung silently out—an enormous thick, steel door, faced with bricks. The safe it disclosed was six feet high and three feet wide.

How deep it was, Fergusson could not yet see, for the president's shadow covered the opening, ran up the wall above it and then twisted backward in an immense blur upon the ceiling.

He looked back over his shoulder at Fergusson, his porcine eyes glittering with childish delight, his teeth catching the reflection of the light.

"It is the masterpiece of a great Spanish ironworker and locksmith. No one man in all the world can open it, except and only Ignacio Lolas; for it is opened not with a key, but by magic. The man who made it for me is dead." He crossed himself. "So that I alone know the five letters of a woman's name that must be set out on the alphabet behind the movable brick. Tell me, *señor,* even in your own country have you seen such a safe as this?"

"It is undoubtedly the finest in the world," said Fergusson. "But does the villain Brosso, your *capitaz,* know of it?"

"He does, the dog," said the president gloomily. "He once saw the brick out of position; but no more. I was able to swing the door to as he entered. And mercifully and magically the door locks itself on shutting."

Fergusson mentally noted these facts with great care. In spite of the pain that was like the touch of white-hot metal against his spine, his lips flickered into a momentary smile of deep but quiet pleasure.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The president did not notice.

He came back as far as the table, picked up the lamp, and ambled toward his precious safe.

Fergusson could see now that it was as deep as it was high, with shelves on all three of its sides. The president walked straight into his cavern and set the lamp in the nearest vacant space on a shelf, so as to have both hands free for packing the nuggets away in a far corner. It was probably reluctance to turn his back on his treasure that impelled him to withdraw from it backwards.

As he came abreast of the lamp and stretched out his hand to take it up, Fergusson called to him in a very mild, unstartling voice, "Lolas, be careful not to drop the lamp—if anything should alarm you when you turn round. I have you amply covered and will shoot the instant you try to do anything, except what I tell you."

The president was obviously puzzled. He turned as dully and as slowly as he spoke. "You will, you say shoot me?"—then his mouth fell suddenly ajar and there was a slow trickle of saliva from its corners. But he remembered what Fergusson had said about dropping the lamp, and gripped it very tight.

Fergusson now had a left hand—at the end of an outstretched, complete, and robust arm. In it was a dazzlingly bright little revolver.

"It is the devil. The devil himself. The most preposterously evil one. A miracle." It was a whimper coming from the president, so weak and so utterly sniveling that Fergusson was none too sure of his being able to hold the lamp much longer.

To pull the fellow together he snapped, "Put up your other hand and come out nearer. Staring at your pistol won't bring it to you."

"But must I, *señor,* indeed come nearer to the devil?"

"Aye, that you must, my beauty." Then Fergusson came back to the language they both had learned to understand. "Surely. Or he will work another magic."

V

THE president of the Sacred Republic shuffled heavily and sadly forward. At the door of the safe he said again, "But *señor,* must I—"

"You must come out and lean forward and place the lamp on the edge of the table and step back and hold up both your ugly hands as high as they will go. Or I will plug you as sweet as a daisy."

He obeyed, his eyes glued to the muzzle of Fergusson's revolver, still loathesomely dribbling. "Magic. Magic. Magic." He kept mumbling. And then, with his hands stuck obediently up, "*Señor,* will you not allow me to lower one hand—to make the sign?"

"That I will not," said Fergusson, "for it is not magic at all, but pure common sense. I once saw a man die in this country of yours, just because he had no more hands than he was thought to have. Well I do not know any way of growing a third hand, for emergencies. But when I was coming out of that God-forsaken feverhole of your *Infieles,* it struck me that nothing would be easier than to come with only one hand showing for all daily jobs; and to keep the other one, as the saying is in my country, up my sleeve, for jobs like this one. On the inside of my coat-sleeve, at the elbow, I made a slit. On the side of my coat I made another to fit it, and stitched the two together. It is very neat. In my shirts also there is a slit; but these are left to look like a tear, in case some rascal should find them. It is sometimes tiring to carry one's hand all day against one's stomach; but it has the company of this revolver, and a knife which you will presently see, when I draw it to cut this confounded strap.

"Remember all this well, *amigo.*

"And don't forget this: it would take you at least three seconds to get round the table to your revolver. It would take me less than one half of one second to make six holes in your ugly carcass. And that would suit my purpose just as well.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For it is all one to me whether you go on living or die. So keep still."

He got the knife out of the belt under his shirt. Its half was a fair handful, in addition to the pistol-butt. He managed, however. When he had cut through the strap at his wrist, the sudden placing of all his weight on his stiff and widely-splayed feet nearly threw him off his balance.

When he had freed his ankles and got some life back into his feet by sitting on the president's chair and waggling them about, he said, "Now, in you go."

"In?" asked the President, "what do you mean, *señor?*"

"I mean *in*—into the finest safe in all the world, fathead. That word, by the way, means in my country, 'Most illustrious politician.' Go on; your horse is waiting."

"But my horse is outside." It looked very much as if he were going altogether soft, and Fergusson had had enough of it all.

"Take off those boots and spurs. I'll want them to make a noise like a president. Hurry." The president still had wits enough to see that some little movement in the hand of Fergusson about the revolver-butt was the subtlety of the master. He stooped, uncomfortably, and pulled off the boots and stood again, sheepishly, but remembering to put up his hands.

"By the holy saints!" Fergusson exclained, "I had forgotten those nuggets. That shows you how you have upset me. Out with them. Go in and roll them out along the floor. No throwing them, mind, or there'll be devilish trouble."

Lolas went in and set them on the floor, and very reverently trundled them out with his gaily stockinged feet.

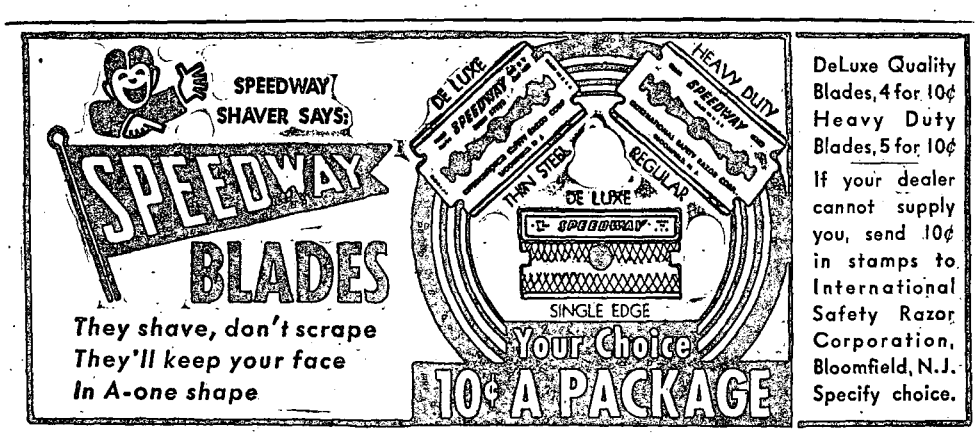
The great lout was weeping—a sight as sickening as corpses being bundled into a wagon. "Now. tell me your magic—this lady's name that opens the safe—in case we decide that you can come out again, when you've promised to be good."

"Anita."

"Very well. Just as I shut the door I will toss in that great revolver of yours. It may be that Brosso will be the one to let you out; and I'd not trust that fellow—not even with you. *Adios*, Excellency."

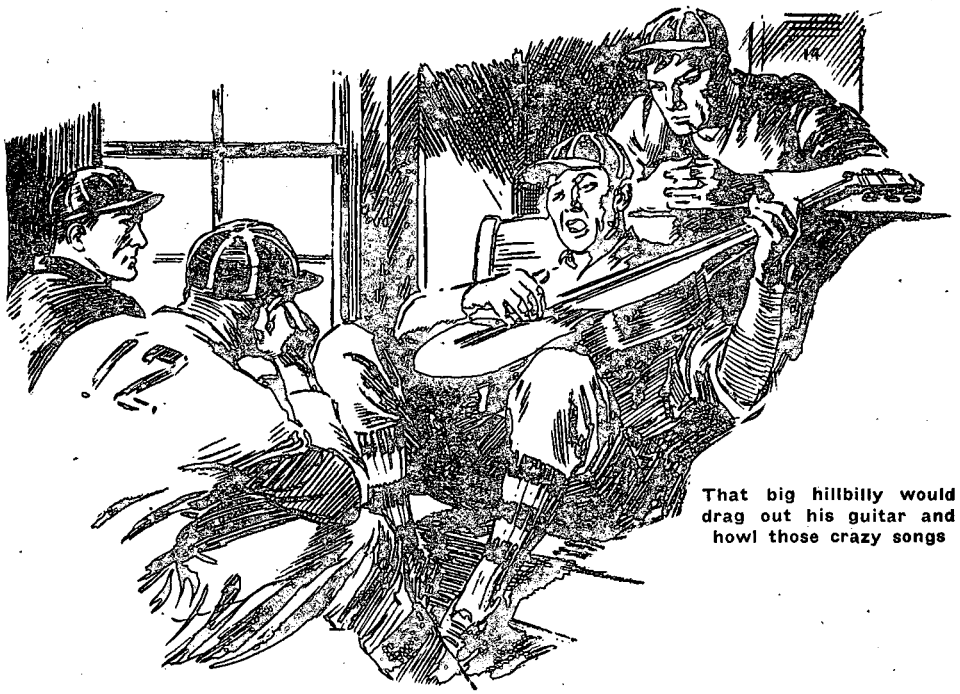
Two or three of the weary loungers in the dark corridor and the courtyard were sufficiently wide awake to say, when the clanking, swaggering, cloaked, hatted and hooded figure had swung into the silver-embossed saddle and ridden away with his attendant rifleman, "He has put him in a good, lively humor—that last, one-armed one has . . . "

Others, here and there, were not too weary to grunt in reply.



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nightingale at Second



That big hillbilly would drag out his guitar and howl those crazy songs

Del Catlen hailed from the Carolina hills, and he was the smartest infielder in the League; but when he started feuding with a rookie, organized baseball took to the woods

By JOHN WIGGIN

"BOYS," said Billy Shuman, "I hate to interrupt your game but I got a little announcement to make. Where is Jim Westcott?"

Well, Jim wasn't any place around the Pullman. There was I and Lum Althouse, the pitcher from Arkansaw, Osey Creswell, the Oklahoma centerfielder—bats .330 in the cleanup spot—and Tex Chadwick, the catcher, and Delmer Catlen, the second baseman. All of us but Delmer were playing cards. He was sitting across the aisle playing his old broken-down guitar and droning out one of those hillbilly ballads.

"Well, here's how it is, boys," said Billy Shuman, "I have played my last game at first base."

Osey Creswell was dealing, and the cards slipped out of his hands and dribbled all over the floor of the car. We all froze in our seats. Billy Shuman quitting! The greatest player-manager in the Big Leagues leaving us!

"No," said Billy, smiling, "I'm still managing. But I've benched myself for good."

"Billy! You cain't do that to us!" Osey cried. "Why you've played first base for the Badgers for sixteen years. We wouldn't of win no pennant last year, nor the World Series neither, ef'n you hadn't of be'n in there, fightin'. Billy, you cain't quit on us!"

"Thanks, Osey," said Billy—the way he said it kind of made me choke up—"but a ballplayer isn't any younger than his legs. I sort of hoped I could go three weeks

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more and finish out the season. But when I get up every morning with rheumatism like a four-alarm fire, I figure it's time to get off the field. Especially with us starting a three-game series with the Giants, day after tomorrow."

We were all standing up. Now I knew why Billy wanted Jim Westcott. Jim was his regular understudy at first base, and, to be very frank, he was not a very good one. Jim is a deadly pinch-hitter, but around the bag he is nothing but a clown.

"Now, here's what I want to tell you," Billy went on, "I knew this was coming sooner or later, so I've had my eye out for a new first baseman. I sent for him last night."

"A *new* first baseman!" Delmer Catlen exploded. "Won't Jim Westcott be takin' your place?"

"No, Del," said Billy, patiently, "Jim is a great man at the plate, but you know as well as I do that he just isn't a defensive first-baseman. I want to see him get along, but in National League competition I can't trust him in the field. It's no secret. He knows. I've told him."

DELMER CATLEN'S face looked like a thunderstorm in the Great Smokies. He and Jim Westcott roomed together, they both being from North Carolina.

"Don't you know I had a tough decision to make?" said Billy straight at Delmer. "We are in first place, a half a game ahead of the Giants, with three weeks left of the season. We could lose a few tight games by loose fielding around first, if I or Jim are in there. And we can't lose any tight games, not if we want a piece of that Series money."

He paused but nobody said a word. We knew he was right but we felt bad about him, and we felt bad about Jim Westcott.

"So there's a kid from the Coast League joining us tomorrow," said Billy smoothly, "Whitey Gowson has been scouting him all season. Whitey says this boy looks very pretty around the bag, and he is batting .358."

"Aw, that's the Coast League," growled Osey Cresswell, "I'll bet you right now he cain't hit a curve ball."

"I don't care if he can or not," said Billy surprisingly, because Billy, himself, has rarely dropped below .300 in sixteen years. "We got plenty of strength at the plate with you, Osey, and you, Tex"—looking at Chadwick—"and Ray d'Annunzio. And Lidowsky stays around .290. We don't need a hitter as much as we need a fielding first-sacker. Right now, we got an infield like the Maginot Line, and I want to keep it that way."

"What is this jerk's name?" said Catlen, grimly.

"Maguire," said Billy, "Don Maguire. He's young, but it seems he knows his way around. And let's get this straight, boys. There is to be no horsing around on this kid. No tricks, no stunts pulled. This isn't spring-training, it's a pennant fight. I don't know anything about the personality of this Maguire, and I don't care. He can beat up on his grandmother just so long as he performs out in the field. And if you guys want to win this pennant as badly as I do, you won't have any time left for riding a rookie."

Billy started to move down the car, then he caught himself and said, "I almost forgot to tell you. This Don Maguire went to college. He graduated from Stanford last year."

Billy looked at us keenly for a few seconds.

"I wouldn't have told you," he said, "but you can't keep a thing like that a secret. It shouldn't make any difference to you, anyway. Joe Gordon went to college, and they tell me he is doing all right with the Yanks. So, everybody at the Polo Grounds at ten o'clock tomorrow. There's no game, but we're going to need some infield practice, breaking in Maguire."

Billy moved along down the car, and we sat and looked at each other for a while. Nobody offered to pick up the cards and go on with the game.

"A raw-raw boy!" said Delmer Catlen.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"They go and put some dam', know-it-all raw-raw boy on first. After all the years Jim Westcott has been around, waitin' for his chance. He's goin' to feel awful, and I feel awful too."

"Joe Gordon!" Osey Cresswell snorted, "Who is he? On the Yanks, ain't he? Who're the Yanks?"

"They over in the 'Merican League," said Tex Chadwick. Tex never talks very much.

"Well," said Delmer, "that new boy better be good. He better not expect me to play any different'n I always have. Ef the way I peg down to first is good enough for Billy Shuman, I guess it's good enough for any lousy raw-raw boy."

DELMER was beginning to get himself all worked up, when he unconsciously pulled something out of his pocket. He ducked his head and stared down at an envelope in his hand. His face broke into a broad grin.

"Well, I'll be a son-of-gun," he said. "Here I been carryin' around this letter from little Floramay, and I hain't even read it yet!"

He ripped open the envelope and unfolded the little piece of paper. His eyes rested on the pencil-scrawl for a minute, and he gave a pleased chuckle.

"That Floramay," he laughed looking up, "I sw'ar, she's the doggonedest cutest little brat! Here she ain't seven years old yet, and she c'n write better'n I kin."

That isn't saying much. I've watched Delmer autograph a scorecard, and it takes him about five minutes just to put his name down. He tossed the letter over to me.

"Read it out loud, Ed," he said, "so ever'body c'n hear."

This was a regular thing. Whenever Del opened a letter with people around, if I was there, he would make me read the letter out loud. He said even if I was nothing but a lousy substitute infielder, I could read out loud better than anyone he knew. They were cute letters at that.

This one said: "Dear Dady, Unkle Ranse went out with old Jessy and gotten a coon. He sez he gone to get more coons, and then I will hav me a coon cote for winter. Ma sez Im a good girl and I shur do luv you very mutch. Ma and baby is well. Yors truly, yor dorter, Floramay."

When I finished, Delmer slapped his thigh and roared with delight. The colored porter happened to be going past, and Del reached out and grabbed him.

"Go get me a telegraph form. I want you to send a telegraph for me."

And when the porter came back with the blanks, Del sat back like J. P. Morgan and dictated a telegram to Floramay. I could hardly keep a straight face. He told Floramay he was going to hit a lot of homers and win the pennant. Del has hit maybe five homers in his life, and he is not what you would call a powerhouse. Right now his average was .246, and he was batting eighth.

WE HADN'T any more than checked in at our hotel in New York when Don Maguire reports to Manager Billy. He has come in by plane so that he get in that extra practice with us the next day, which is Monday and an open date.

Billy puts the boy in with me as a roommate, and right away I like his looks. He is young and strong. About six-one, I would say, and would weigh a hundred and ninety. He has a nice face, and a quiet, pleasant manner. It seems we both come from San Francisco, so we get along together very well. I found out he went to the same high school I did, and that helped, too.

After a while I took him around to meet the rest of the team. Some of the fellows, like Patsy Connell, and Ray d'Annunzio, and Nose Lidowsky, were very nice to him. But did those Southern boys give Maguire the chill!

Tex Chadwick, and the Ozark twins, Lum Althouse and Champ Kirby, just froze up when I brought the rookie around. And Delmer, and Osey Creswell, and Jim Westcott wouldn't even speak to him, much less shake hands. The kid's face

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was a mile long when we got back to our room.

"Take it easy, Don," I said, "Those boys are just naturally suspicious of strangers. As soon as they find out you're a ballplayer, and not a revenooer, they'll come around."

"Oh, I understand," said Don, "I guess it's natural to resent a newcomer from the minors. I only hope I can show them I belong with the Badgers."

"I wouldn't worry," I replied, "From what we've heard, you handle that apple pretty well."

Next day out at the Polo Grounds, I want to tell you we saw a real first baseman.

Maguire was a natural athlete, fast and sure, and he hustled every minute. Well, of course, he had to. Connell, at third, and Dutch Shaefer, the shortstop ran the legs off him during infield practice. But they did it impersonally, and they did it for a good reason. We had to find out the kid's weaknesses, so that we could correct them.

But Del Catlen was another thing. Every peg that came over from second came like a bullet, and either hit the dirt four feet away or went way over Maguire's head. It was mean and spiteful of Del but the rookie took it like a soldier.

He stayed cool and poised through it all. He knew what was going on, all right, but he never once let on. Whenever he would miss a wide one that George Kelly himself couldn't have reached, he would grin down at Del and shake his head good-naturedly.

Unfortunately, Don Maguire didn't do so well in batting practice. Just as Osey Creswell had predicted, he had a little trouble hitting curve balls. But on the whole, Billy Shuman was pretty tickled with the rookie, and told me so.

BUT I made up my mind I was going to talk to Del Catlen, and try and persuade him to lay off Maguire a little. So, when we got downtown, after practice, I walked into the hotel with him.

Del was in a vicious mood. He'd just heard from somebody that Pepper Martin was going on the radio again with that hillbilly outfit he organized among the St. Louis Cards. Now, Del plays a guitar and sings hillbilly songs himself, and he was very jealous of the publicity that Pepper was getting.

"I c'n sing better'n him any day in the week," Del declared, as we walked through the lobby. "Why I'll know more mountain ballads in an hour than Pepper Martin'll know in a year."

Just then, a little guy in a tight-fitting, stripedy suit comes up and says, "Mr. Catlen?"

"Yeah," growls Del, "Who're you?"

"My name is Wolff," says the little man, "Here is my card. I would like to have a few minutes with you. I want to talk over a little idea."

Del stared down at the card in his hand. I looked over his shoulder and saw, "Wolff, Inc. Music Publishers. Pincus Wolff, Pres."

"Music publisher, hey?" I says.

"That's right," says the little guy with a polite smile.

Del looked at him. "Well, I'll be dog-goned," said Del. "Why Ed, here, and I was just talkin' 'bout my music when you come over. I was tellin' him how I c'd beat the shucks off of Pepper Martin singin' them old mountain ballads. What do you want to do, put me on the radio?"

"Radio, I wouldn't know so much about," says Pincus Wolff with a laugh. "I publish songs. At that, I might be able to do something for you. I have plenty of friends in the radio business."

"I sure would like to sing over the radio," says Del.

"Well, look," says Wolff, "how about if we go over to my office and have a little talk?"

"Yeah, I guess we got time before dinner," says Del, "if it ain't too fur away."

"It's right over on Broadway," says Wolff. "What have you got to lose?"

So we turned around and walked out of the hotel with Pincus Wolff.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'm a regular fan, you know," he says, when we get settled in the cab. "I never miss a game at the Polo Grounds when the Badgers come to town."

"Yeah?" says Del, and I could tell he'd much rather talk about his music than baseball.

"Yes sir!" says Wolff. "Are you going to take them, tomorrow?"

"Not a chance!" says Del. I couldn't kick him because Pincus Wolff was sitting between us. "We *would* beat 'em," Del went on, "ef we didn't have no buggy busher playin' first."

"This kid, Maguire?" says Wolff, quickly. "I was going to ask you. How is he?"

"Well, he cain't hit, and he cain't field," Del snapped. "So you tell me!"

"Well, well, I'm glad to know that," says Wolff. "You see, some of us boys in the music business get together at lunch-time, and we will sometimes lay a friendly bet. Right now the odds are very high on the Badgers."

"Well, you better bet on the Gi'nts tomorrow," Del grumbled. " 'Cause they sure goin' to win soon's they get on to that rookie."

"You're sure of that, huh?" Wolff says with a laugh.

"Man, I know it!" says Del.

I wanted to punch him on the nose. That is no way to talk. Wolff turned around to me.

"What do you think?" he says, "Do you agree with Mr. Catlen?"

"It's this way, Mr. Wolff," I replied, "I never discuss tomorrow's game with anybody outside of the team."

I wanted to add that I never discussed tomorrow's game with a stranger who admitted he laid bets on ball games. Even friendly bets. But the cab stopped, and we went up to the offices of Wolff, Inc.

I NEVER was in a music publisher's before and it was very interesting. There was a big tough-looking guy up there, and Wolff told him to show me around. There were pianos everywhere, and big radio-phonographs. All over the walls, there were hundreds of signed photographs of celebrities, and everywhere there were stacks of music.

When we got back to Wolff's private office, Del was sitting on the edge of a desk with a guitar, singing. A little guy beside him was busy writing down notes on some music-paper, and Wolff was wagging his head in rhythm.

"I got a hen-peckin' mother," Del sang, "and a hen-peckin' wife. Got a hen-peckin' daughter—My Lawd! what a life!"

And then he sang, "One potater, two potater, three potater, *four!* One potater, two potater, three potater, *more!*"

Wolff seemed tickled to death.

"That's fine," he said, getting up, "fine. George, here, has got them all down. We'll get out a folio of Delmer Catlen mountain songs as soon as we can, and you might make some money out of it. That kind of a song is very popular with the public, right now."

Del put down the guitar and looked around with a pleased grin at everybody in the room. I don't think he halfway understood what Wolff was talking about, but he felt wonderful because these strangers appeared to like the way he sang.

Out in the hall, Wolff rang for the elevator and said, "Well, I'm certainly glad to have made your acquaintance, Mr. Catlen. I hope our association will be mutually profitable. I tell you I'll do my part, and the rest is up to you. I'll send you a contract around in the morning, and you can look it over and sign it, and send it back. Okay?"

"Yeah. I guess so," says Del and looks at me kind of helplessly. The elevator carried us down to the street.

"Take it from me, Del," I says on the way back to the hotel, "I don't know any more about this business than you do, but if I was in your position, I wouldn't say anything about it until you see a copy of that songbook. You know, something might go wrong, and then you would be nothing but a laughingstock."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I wouldn't want to be no laughing-stock," says Del, "Mebbe you're right."

THE next afternoon thirty thousand people went out to the Polo Grounds. It was what the sports-writers called a "crucial series." We were leading the league by half a game, and that is not exactly a stranglehold when the Giants are in second place. We heard that Terry was pitching Hubbell.

Maguire looked a little better during the pre-game batting practice. He still had a little difficulty finding a curve that came low and inside. But he batted left-handed, and swung fast, and when he did connect, he would pull the ball into right field. So Billy Shuman put him in third place in the batting order.

The weather was a little cool for Hubbell, or maybe he wasn't quite warmed up by game time. Anyway our leadoff man, Lidowsky, hit a clean single to left.

Then Patsy Connell, who is very fast, laid down a honey toward first, and beat the throw. Two on, no outs, and Don Maguire faced his first major league pitcher—Carl Hubbell.

The first pitch was low and inside, and Don let it go. It was a called strike. But he took hold of the next offering and slammed it into right center for a double. Lidowsky scored, and Connell at his heels just beat the relay to the plate.

It was time for Hub to tighten up and he did. Osey Creswell flied out to center, and Chadwick and d'Annunzio hit into the dirt.

But those two runs were a nice present for Lum Althouse as he went out to the mound to start the second half of the first inning. The fans behind first base gave Maguire a nice hand, but he ignored them and whipped the ball around the infield as cool as a veteran. Del Catlen, who is strictly a Fancy Dan, was all over the place, jumping around like a monkey on a stick.

Lum Althouse started out looking like a pretty good lefthander, himself. The first Giant batter grounded out, short to first, Dutch Schaefer pegging carefully and beautifully to Maguire. The second man fanned. Lum grinned over at Del, and spat a quantity of tobacco juice. The third Giant up sent a hot grass-cutter out between second and first.

Del streaked over and knocked it down. He had plenty of time for an easy toss, but he held the ball until the last fifth of a second, and then flung it with all his might. The ball traveled like a bullet and crashed into Maguire's mitt, knee-high. The boy held on to it, although his hand must have hurt plenty; and the man was out, retiring the side.

Billy Shuman left the dugout and went out to meet Delmer Catlen coming in off the field. I don't know what he said to the second baseman, but I could guess. Delmer's face was flushed and sullen as he picked out a bat from the rack.

Schaefer, leading off the second inning, fouled out to first. Catlen grounded out to Hubbell, and Lum Althouse fanned.

From then on, the game settled down to a pitchers' duel, and those two runs Maguire had batted in, began to look bigger and bigger. The kid didn't get another hit all afternoon, but he played a sweet game around the bag—in spite of Delmer Catlen.

Even from where I sat in the dugout, I could see that Maguire had to reach for every peg down from second. Catlen didn't do anything so obvious as that bruiser he threw in the first inning, but every ball was just a little low, or a little high, or a little wide. They weren't really bad throws, but they were all a little hard to get.

Of course, that kind of thing is sort of tough on the nerves of a rookie first baseman, playing his first game in the majors.

LUM ALTHOUSE thought it was funny. Once when they'd just come in off the field, Lum called out to Catlen. "Man, you sure are standing that rookie on his head, Delly," he chuckled, "The way he's hangin' on to those curves of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

yours, I'm beginnin' to think he ain't bad."

Nobody in the dugout said a word. Maguire bent over and picked a blade of grass off one of his cleats.

Billy Shuman blew off in the last of the eighth. The score was still 2-0 in our favor. Althouse and Hubbell had each only allowed five hits. With two down and nobody on, the Giant batter smacked a hard bounder to Catlen.

Del got his hands on it, staggered back, and threw off-balance to first. The ball was soaring over Maguire's head, but he left his feet, snagged it out of the air, and fell across the bag for the putout.

"Just one more bum peg," Bill yelled at Del, "and you go out of the ball game."

"But Billy, I was off balance," Del whined, "I couldn't help that."

"Listen," said Billy, "when I was playing first, you used to throw 'em perfect if you were lying flat on your back."

Del shut up.

Lum Althouse ran into trouble in the last of the ninth. The first two Giants popped up, but the third one got a single. The hit-and-run was on, and the next batter slashed a wicked grounder behind the runner.

Delmer made a headlong dive for the ball and got it. There was no play at second. So from a kneeling position, the second baseman lobbed the ball gently and accurately to Maguire. It landed in Maguire's mitt and bounced out. The crowd stopped in the exits and began to yell as Zeke Bonura came up to the plate. With two on, Zeke hit a homer and won the game.

In the clubhouse afterward, Del Catlen stood in front of Maguire and said loudly and distinctly, "That last one you muffed was no fault of mine."

I held my breath. Del was strictly out of line, and the rookie had a right to call him plenty on his earlier brand of play. But if he did, the rest of the team would never forgive him.

"It was my error," said Maguire steadily, "and I'm sorry."

Del hadn't expected that, and for a minute he couldn't think of anything to do but glare. Then he swaggered off to the showers.

That night in our hotel room, I told Maguire how smart he was not to rise to Catlen's bait.

"I wouldn't think of it," he replied, "but just to you, privately, I want to say that by the end of that game my nerves were pretty jumpy. And on that particular play, I was set for a bad throw. Ed, I was so amazed when it was *good* that I couldn't hang on to the ball."

"I think some of the fellows realize that," I said.

Maguire ran a hand through his black hair. "You know, Ed," he said, "I can't understand how a professional ballplayer would risk his Series cut just to spite a rookie. I know he wasn't trying to throw the game—one man can't, anyhow—but he wasn't helping much to win." Then he swore. "I'm sorry, Ed. That's no way to talk. I hope you understand."

"It won't go any further," I said, "and forget any idea you may have that Delmer Catlen would throw a game because he isn't built— Say!"

I broke off short. My mind flashed back to that scene in the music publisher's. Delmer had been alone with that slimy little Wolff guy for about ten minutes while I was taken on a personally conducted tour of the place.

"What?" said Maguire.

"Nothing," I said. That Wolff had wanted some inside so he'd know what way to bet. He couldn't get me to talk, but Delmer had opened up. Could Delmer have made a deal? But one man can't throw a game.

"You started to say something," said Maguire.

"I said nothing," I snapped. "Do you want me to say it again?"

"No," said Maguire, looking very lonesome.

That hairy mountaineer, I thought, that Delmer Catlen—he would sell his soul to get on the radio, or get some kind of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

recognition of his singing. But, even to keep up with Pepper Martin, he wouldn't sell out the Badgers. It wasn't possible!

THE next afternoon, I watched Delmer Catlen like a hawk. It was a tough game. Melton had one of his days. We made plenty of hits off him, but not when they counted. Champ Kirby didn't do quite so well for us. Going into the seventh we were trailing, 3-1. Don Maguire played a lovely defensive game, but he couldn't hit the ball past the pitcher's box.

As I say, I had my eye on Delmer Catlen, and he didn't make one wrong move all afternoon. Don't forget, my suspicions were plenty aroused, and even so, I couldn't find a thing the matter with that hillbilly's second-basing.

He was the first man up in that seventh and got a clean single. Champ Kirby marched up to the plate sore because he was losing a game, and when a change-of-pace ball came along, he pushed it into short left for another single.

Then Melton tightened up. Lidowsky swung hard at the "downer," topped it, and rolled it weakly toward first for an easy out. Catlen and Kirby advanced a base. Connell, the next batter, was ordered to wait 'em out, but the Giants' pitcher rose to heights and fanned him.

Now, with the tying runs on second and third, and two down, Billy Shuman had another tough decision to make. It was Maguire's turn at bat, but the rookie had gone hitless all afternoon. In fact, in his last trip to the plate, he had very sourly hit into a double play.

A moment later, the chattering crowd heard Billy's decision over the loudspeaker. "—attention please! Westcott, Number Eighteen, now batting for Maguire! Westcott—"

Melton worked over him, but Jim hit the three-and-two ball out toward the flagpole. Kirby pranced across the plate after Catlen with the tying run, but Westcott, who runs as slowly as he thinks, tried to stretch a long double into a tight triple. He slid into third, out a mile, retiring the side. But he had tied up the game.

Maguire was excused for the day and went back to the showers, so he didn't see the awful two-run error Jim Westcott committed in the last of the eighth. The final score was Giants, 5, Badgers, 3.

It was a silent, disgusted bunch of ballplayers that trooped into the visitors' dressing rooms. Maguire was nowhere around. He had probably dressed quickly and gone on downtown before the game ended. That was the wrong thing to do.

I went straight up to the room when I got back to the hotel. I was going to wise up that rookie if he was there. He was. He was sitting on his bed looking very grimly at some papers in his hand.

"Why didn't you wait for me, Don?" I said.

"For a very good reason," he answered slowly. "I committed some petty larceny back in the clubhouse, and I wanted to talk about it to you alone."

"You mean you swiped something?"

He held up the sheets of paper. "I swiped these," he said, "out of Delmer Catlen's pants pocket. The pants were lying on the floor and two long envelopes were sticking out."

"Why would you do a thing like that?" I asked in a hard voice.

"I'll tell you why," he said, in a voice just as hard. "I have suspected for two days that Delmer Catlen and maybe a couple of other guys were trying to throw games. These letters prove that my hunch wasn't so wrong."

"You're crazy as a hoot-owl!" I yelled, but my heart sank.

"Read these and weep," he said, bitterly, and handed over the correspondence.

"I WAS sitting in the lobby yesterday morning, and I saw a messenger hand one of these envelopes to Catlen. He was standing around with Creswell and Westcott, and seemed to be expecting the messenger. He opened the envelope and read the contents carefully. I could see his lips moving. Once, he started to show the contract, there, to the other guys, but he

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seemed to change his mind and he stuck the papers back into the envelope and into his hip pocket. This morning I saw the same thing happen."

The contract was from Wolff, Inc., agreeing to publish the *Delmer Catlen Ballad Book*. The typewritten note with it was on plain paper and was unsigned. It said:

> I could not really get down to details with that man, Ed Marvin, around, who I do not trust, but I guess we understand each other. So you arrange it your own way, but do not take too many players in on the deal or it will get out. The payoff will be by messenger after the second game you lose to the Giants. You better destroy this.

I handed those back to Maguire and read the second note. It was also on plain paper and unsigned.

> Nice going but do not make it too obvious. The messenger will come around after today's game *if* you lose. And if you can lose tomorrow's game as well, there will be something extra. If any outsider gets suspicious about the money, tell them it is an advance on your song book royalties.

Silently, Maguire took the second note from me and put them all in his inside coat pocket. I couldn't meet his eyes.

Just then I heard the sound of running feet, thudding on the carpet of the hallway outside. The door to our room burst open and Delmer Catlen shot in. His face was flushed and excited and he grabbed me by the arm.

"Eddy!" he cried, "I cain't hardly believe it! Do ya think it'd be all right now to tell the fellas about my songs bein' published? Lookie yere! They's ten of 'em!"

He held out a fistful of hundred-dollar bills. I knocked his arm down.

"You lying skunk!" I said, through my teeth. "You can't pull that gag on us, because we already know the truth."

"What you talkin' 'bout?" said Del, looking astonished. "This money's from that fella, Wolff. You know, the music fella. He sent me the contrac' and ever'thing."

"Yeah, and he sent you a couple of letters, too," I snapped. "Letters that gave away the truth about that dirty money you got in your hand! Why don't you tell us what was in those letters?" I yelled, "You might as well, because we got you by the short hairs!"

"Eddy," he said, "I sure don' know whut y'all gettin' so mad 'bout." He took a step toward me, and there was a hint of fear in his eyes.

"Eddy," he said, trying to sound reasonable. "Whut's on yo' mind, son? I'd show you them letters only I lost 'em some place. Whut you mean, dirty money?"

"It's no use trying to bluff any longer, Del," I said. "You're either going straight down to Billy Shuman with me and tell him the whole thing, or you're going to stay here while I work over you. I think I'll break both your arms just for a beginner—"

"Ed, wait a second."

IT WAS Maguire, very quiet and cool. He was balancing an open book in his left hand. With his right hand he fished a pencil out of his vest-pocket and made a mark in the middle of a page.

"I came across a passage in this book," said the rookie to Catlen, "which I think may have a bearing on this situation."

"You keep out of this, busher!" Delmer cried, backing away. "You and your books! I got trouble enough with Ed, here, 'thout you have to butt in!"

"But this paragraph I marked is about you, Del," Maguire insisted. "It says here that Delmer Catlen and Eddy Collins are the two greatest second basemen in the history of baseball."

"Me'n Eddy *Collins!*" said Del, staring. "I don't b'lieve it!"

"That's what it says here," said the rookie. "Here. Read it yourself if you don't believe me. Where the pencil check mark is."

Del took the book slowly and turned his eyes down on the page. After a minute

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a shy smile appeared on his face.

"Well, I'll be doggoned!" he said, wonderingly. "It *do* say that, don't it? Delmer Catlen and Eddy Collins! Whut's the name of this here book? I got to get me a copy."

"It's a novel by Charles G. Norris," Maguire said, quietly. "It's called *Bricks Without Straw,* and there isn't a word about baseball in the whole book. Delmer Catlen, *you can't read!*"

"I kin too!" Delmer bellowed, his face getting beet-red. Then his eyes fell. "You —you tricked me!" he whispered.

But I was standing up laughing—and almost crying.

"You crazy boob!" I gasped, "if I'd only know you couldn't read, I could have saved you a lot of trouble." I made a grab for him as he started for the door. "Stay here, you chump!" I grunted, "You're in a bad jam, and we've got to figure out how to get you out of it."

WELL, it took Maguire and I a full ten minutes to hammer the truth into that ignorant backwoodsman's head. Apparently, he had been so intent on his songs, that afternoon at the publisher's, that all of Pincus Wolff's hints had gone clear over his head. And Pincus, in turn, must have figured that Del was just being cagey when he didn't make any direct answer.

And, of course, when those letters came, Del made a show of reading them, even though they were just so much Greek to him. But when we lost two tough games to the Giants, Pincus Wolff thought it was the result of his conspiracy, and sent around a small share of the killing he made.

So, now that stupid mountaineer pride of Delmer Catlen's that had driven him to conceal so carefully from everybody the fact that he couldn't read had gotten him into a nasty situation. And right then, I couldn't see any very good way of getting him out of it safely. The crazy hillbilly! He was no help at all.

His idea was to go over to that music publisher's and shoot the place up. Maguire and I finally decided the best thing to do, was to go to Billy Shuman and lay the whole thing before him. Somehow we talked Del into doing that, although it was no easy job.

To my mind, Billy Shuman is the greatest manager and the finest character in the major leagues. As long as I worked for him, I admired him, but never quite so much as when Del and Maguire and I walked in and dumped this situation in his lap.

After I got through telling him, he took one look at Del and sized him up correctly. He never once questioned the truth of the story, and never said a word that wasn't kind and understanding.

Billy thought for a long time, and then he said, "If this thing got out now, it would ruin Delmer, it would be very bad for the Badgers, and it would be bad for baseball in general. So we'll take a chance and keep mum about it.

"But just to protect ourselves in case it ever leaked out in the future, here's what I'm going to do. There are two baseball editors in this town that I would trust completely. I'm going to call them in, and, in your presence, tell them the whole story and ask them to keep it a secret. And with them as witnesses, I'm going to seal up this thousand dollars in an envelope, and send it by registered mail to Black Mountain College down in North Carolina. That will be an anonymous contribution from you, Del, to a fine institution. It's a place where maybe your children will go some day and learn the things you never had a chance to learn.

"And after tomorrow's game," Billy continued, "I'm going around to see this Pincus Wolff, myself, and I'm going to let him know that in New York State, attempted bribery in professional sports is a felony. He can be put in jail for five years, and fined $10,000.

"But get this!" Billy said, raising his voice, "I won't do that until *after* tomorrow's game. I'm going to let him bet his shirt on the Giants. And it will be up

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to you guys to see that he loses his bet! How about it? All right?"

So that's what I mean about Billy Shuman being the greatest manager and the finest character in the major leagues. We brought a lot of trouble to dump in his lap; he took it, and fixed it up, and sent us out of there better ball players. All of us, Catlen included.

"Billy!" whispered Del, with the tears streaming down his face, "never mind if the Gi'nts pitch Mathewson tomorrow, I'll pin his ears back!"

TO MAKE this one of those regular old ding-dong baseball stories, I ought to be able to tell you about how the Badgers fought their way up from behind, the next day, and won a terrific game in the ninth, or maybe the sixteenth inning.

But that isn't exactly how things went.

To begin with, the Badgers were sore, every one of them. But Delmer Catlen was fighting mad. He was fighting it up all over the infield during practice, and by the time the game started, he had that visitors' dugout sounding like a lunatic asylum.

But Nose Lidowsky, leading off, lined out to short, and we all groaned. Patsy Connell was overanxious and fouled out to the catcher. We held our breaths as Maguire stepped up to the plate. A few seconds later, hell broke loose. The rookie kissed the very first pitch on the nose and blasted that ball in the general direction of the Atlantic Ocean. As far as I know, it's still traveling.

And the only difference between that apple and the guy who hit it was, Maguire knew when to stop.

A howling mob of Badgers swarmed out of the dugout and climbed all over Maguire as he loped in across the plate. The next five Badgers hit safely, including Del Catlen who poled out a triple. When, finally, Little Bear Carson popped up for the third out, we had collected five runs, all scored after two were out.

The Giants were licked before they even came to bat. Little Bear pitched a strong game but he never had to worry. Del Catlen sounded like Johnny Evers in the field, and acted like Cobb at the plate and on the basepaths.

The infield was a ring of iron, and the outfielders had wings on their feet. Del got five hits out of six trips, and Maguire hit four for four. The final score was Badgers 14, Giants 1.

So that was that.

The scene in the clubhouse afterwards was really something. The whole team ran around whooping and hollering and singing like a bunch of school kids. We were going after that pennant, and anybody who tried to stop us—look out! From the way we acted you'd think we'd already won the World Series. In the midst of it all, Billy Shuman tapped me on the shoulder.

"I'm going down to Broadway now," he said. "And I want you to come with me. We're going to call on that music publisher who likes sure-thing bets."

I dressed quickly, and as we left the clubhouse, Del Catlen was standing on a bench yelling at the top of his voice.

"Lissen yere to me, you ignorant bunch o' no-'counts!" he yelled, "I got somethin' to tell y'all. Beginnin' tonight, I'm agoin' to start learnin' readin', 'ritin', an' 'rithmetic! And the fella who's goin' to learn me is none otha then *Professor* Don Maguire, the best dam' first baseman in the National League!"

Everybody yelled their heads off, and Maguire walked up grinning, and shook Del's hand.

"Okay, Del, that's a date," he said, "but in return for that, you've got to give me some music lessons. I want to learn some of those mountain ballads of yours."

"Yes *sir!*" cried Del, "and them lessons kin begin right now! Where's muh guittar? Thanks, Osey. Hyah we go—'One potater, two potater, three potater, *four!* One potater, two potater, three potater, *more!*'"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MEN of
ZANE GREY
NOTED AUTHOR; SPORTSMAN—AND A CHAMPION OF DEEP SEA FISHERMEN.
THE CHAMPS!
THE FISHING SEASON IS UPON US AND AGAIN WE WILL HEAR TALL TALES OF CHAMPION FISHERMEN—HERE ARE A COUPLE OF CHAMPS WHO BACK UP THEIR TALES WITH THE EVIDENCE.
IN MAY, 1930, GREY CAUGHT A SWORDFISH DOWN NEAR TAHITI THAT WEIGHED 1040 LBS.!—AFTER A SHARK HAD BITTEN A CHUNK OUT OF ITS TAIL AS IT WAS BEING LANDED.!
A RECORD.! (SO FAR AS WE KNOW)
THIS ONE WEIGHED "ONLY" 750 POUNDS!
FOR YEARS ZANE GREY HAS HAUNTED ALL THE GOOD FISHING GROUNDS BATTLING THE GAMEST OF ALL BIG GAME FISH—THAT GREYHOUND OF THE SEAS—THE SWORDFISH!
HE'S PLENTY OF MAN! ONCE ON A TRIP AROUND THE WORLD HE PUT DOWN A MUTINY ABOARD HIS YACHT.
THERE ISN'T A SKIPPER FROM KEY WEST TO CAPE TOWN WHO CAN NOT TELL TALL TALES OF ZANE GREY'S PROWESS WITH THE ROD AND REEL.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DARING
by Stookie Allen
Thomas HOWELL
— MULTIMILLIONAIRE WHO BROKE THE CHICAGO WHEAT MARKET, THEN BROKE ALL TUNA FISHING RECORDS!
WHEN THOMAS HOWELL OF CHICAGO SETS OUT TO BREAK A RECORD HE BREAKS IT. —— IN 1934, THE RECORD TUNA CATCH WAS AN 851 POUNDER. HOWELL DECIDED HE COULD CATCH A LARGER ONE — AND AFTER FIVE HUGE CATCHES OFF THE COAST OF NOVA SCOTIA, HE SUCCEEDED! THE FIRST FISH BATTLED 62 HOURS AND HAULED HIS BOAT 200 MILES! (IT WEIGHED 792 LBS)
ANOTHER WEIGHED 830 — JUST 21 POUNDS UNDER THE RECORD — BUT HOWELL WOULDN'T GIVE UP — HE WENT RIGHT BACK AND, TOTALLY UNAIDED, LANDED THE LARGEST TUNA EVER CAUGHT WITH A ROD AND LINE — 956 POUNDS!
(THE TUNA RECORD, SO FAR AS WE KNOW.
THE PRIZE.
THOMAS HOWELL
HOWELL CAUGHT ONE SO BIG A MAN HAD TO GET ON A LADDER TO MEASURE IT. (FROM PHOTO)
RECENTLY HOWELL'S WIFE SUED HIM FOR A DIVORCE — CLAIMING THAT HE SPENT ALL OF HIS TIME AND $150,000 ANNUALLY CATCHING FISH!
P.S. IF YOU KNOW OF ANYONE WHO HAS CAUGHT BIGGER GAME FISH THAN THESE, LET US KNOW — Stookie Allen

Coming soon: Fred Birchmore—Mercury on Wheels

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Puritan's Progress

America, in 1641, was a free country—for the man who could carve out his freedom with a sword. But if he carried a Bible in the other hand . . .

A Complete Novelet

By ROBERT CARSE

Author of "Volcano," "Maximilian's Men," etc.

I

WIND caught the cloud mountains piled high along the horizon. Rain smacked the smooth, bright levels of the sea and the men in the boat sat up staring. "Take your hats, lads," Hugh Greer said. "Get all you can."

He took off his own hat, held it between his knees while he kept his grip on the tiller bar. But the rain did not last. It feathered out into smoky silver that was made molten by the sun. Greer alone remained upright, his reddened eyes on that bland and empty sky rim.

June tenth, he thought, 1641, was the date when we were lost from the ship. Since, for four days, we've done nothing but drift across this Caribbee Sea with death closer every day. There's small chance now any of us shall be saved. You're still a Christian, though, and you have your faith. So pray. . . .

He lowered his head and the words came slow, solemn from him. When he straightened, he saw the ship.

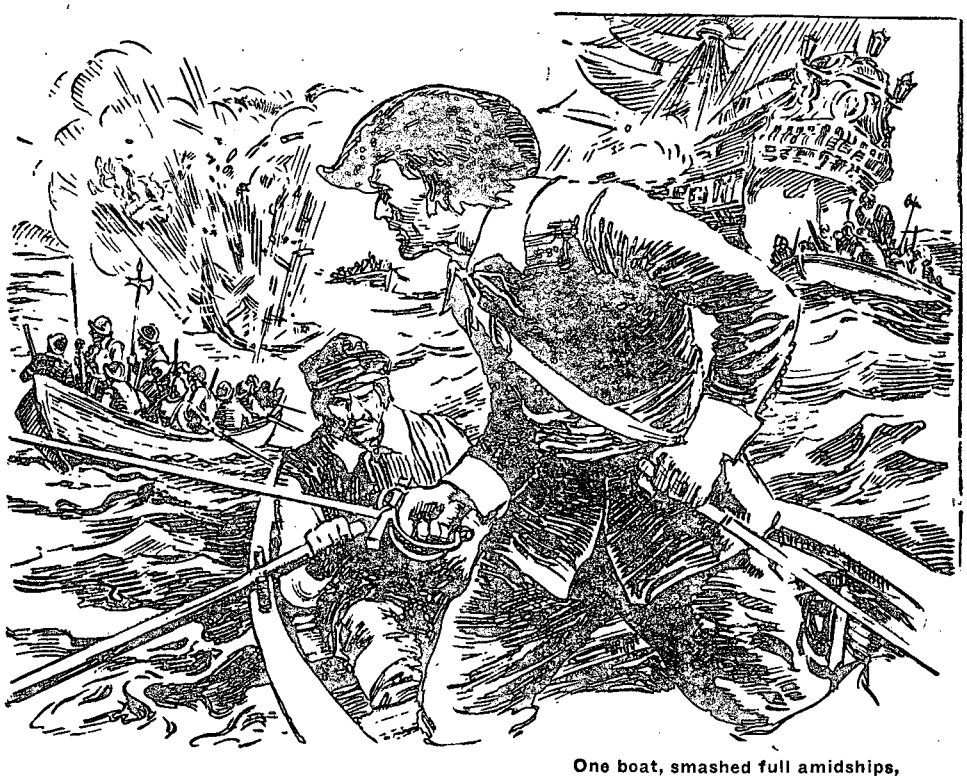
Sun flecked her sails crimson; and the gilt work of her aftercastle glittered. Her gun ports were open, and in the dark apertures the cannon crouched like strange, deadly beasts.

"A galleon," Diccon Henshaw said. "Probably a Don out from Panama. A fine lot of good prayer does us, Master Greer."

"Quiet, unbeliever," Hugh Greer said. All signs of youth had left his face. His jaw bones showed sharp, and webs of lines widened at the corners of his eyes. "The ship yon's a Frenchman, no Don. That's the fleur-de-lys flag at her peak. Sit up, as if you were real soldiers. Put your hats to your heads. We're no enemies of the French. She's the one who'll save us."

The galleon came heavily wallowing

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



One boat, smashed full amidships, sank in a splintered wreck

downwind. Men hauled at her braces and the yards backed, then a boat dropped astern. That moved fast, and Hugh Greer stood up in the stern of his own craft, his hand on his sword.

A young, tall officer commanded the galleon's boat. He wore plum velvet, ostrich plumes on his hat, and a chased silver corselet. His sword was long, almost as slender as a rapier. *"Je suis chargé,"* he said, *"par M'sieur le Chevalier—"*

"We're Puritans," Hugh Greer said thickly. The nearness of the great ship and the sight of this handsome, brilliantly clad man had dazed his fatigued brain. "We're out of a Massachusetts Colony ship. At Providencia Island, we were attacked by the Spaniards while trying to land. Our ship was forced to sail without us. These five men are under my command, and my name is Greer."

"My name," the Frenchman said in bad English, "is called Pierre Le Vasseur. Take your boat to the ship."

Many people crowded at the galleon's side. "Puritans," Le Vasseur told them, laughing. But a woman murmured something that silenced him.

Hugh Greer looked for her as he climbed to the deck. She was slender and youthful, stood among a group of men who were obviously senior officers. "Thank you," he said, and tried to bow. His legs were numb under him; he staggered, grasped at the rail and missed, toppled flat.

Sailors who smelled of sweat and tar carried him below. He was in one of the huge after cabins, he dimly sensed. They were placing him on a silk-coverleted bed. "But I'm dirty," he said. "You are too good."

The woman, the same one who had protested Le Vasseur's laughter, moved close to the bed. Her cool hands held him firmly down. *"Soyez calme,"* she said. "Do not worry any more. We will take care of you, and take care of your men."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HUGH GREER slept with her image through his disturbed dreams. He awoke to find her across the cabin. She sat beside Le Vasseur on a brocaded settee. Le Vasseur played a viol gracefully and well, and the song he sang was about love.

He didn't like Le Vasseur at all, Hugh Greer decided. He was a conceited popinjay who seemed to give little thought to the day of judgment. But Le Vasseur had seen that he was awake, stopped his song to ask, "How are you, Puritan?"

"Much better," Hugh Greer said. "I should like to know, though, about my men."

"This is Mademoiselle Anne de Poincy," Le Vasseur said. "She is the daughter of the Governor-general of the French Caribbees. Yesterday, she tell you not to worry. So why you worry now?"

"But no," Anne de Poincy said. "Your men have been fed, *m'sieur*. Food is ready for you, any time you wish it."

Hugh Greer brought himself upright from the bed. He must be sorry-looking, he thought, in his stained homespun suit and cracked boots. No wonder that yesterday he'd roused Le Vasseur's laughter. "You have been most kind," he said. "But I ought to join my men. My place is with them, not here."

"The Chevalier Fontenay decide that," Le Vasseur said low-voiced, glancing towards the door.

A heavily set, gray-headed man stood in the doorway at the end of the cabin. His thumbs were hooked in his sword belt and his keen eyes played over Hugh Greer. Le Vasseur saluted as he entered, and Anne de Poincy curtsied to him.

"Take *mademoiselle* out on deck," he told Le Vasseur. He waited quietly until they were gone. Then he nodded to Hugh Greer. "Sit down," he said. "I would talk with you. You know who I am?"

"You're named Fontenay," Hugh Greer said, "and I have an idea you command the ship."

"So," Fontenay said. His English was without accent, clear and deliberate. "I gave the orders to have your lot brought aboard. Le Vasseur reported to me that you're from the Massachusetts Colony, and that at Providencia Island you lost your ship."

"We expected," Hugh Greer said, "to find other English folk there. Instead, we were met by the Spaniards. They fired upon us wholly without warning. My boat had been sent to sound the reefs. We were inshore, and our captain had to haul off to sea before all hands and the ship were lost. The Spaniards are good gunners."

"Some of the best," Fontenay said. He rested for a moment in silence, his seamed face grave. "Puritan," he said then, "this vessel is supposed to be bound for Martinique. But I have orders to stop at Tortuga, off the north coast of Hispaniola. The Spaniards have taken hold of the place and use it as a base to raid the French islands. They have their agents in our colonies, know when our ships sail, often catch the smaller ones. Mademoiselle de Poincy's only reason for being aboard here is to hide our real purpose."

"Very smart," Hugh Greer said. "But why mention her?"

"She bespoke me yesterday in your behalf. So now I am asking you to return a favor. I want you and your men to form part of the landing force at Tortuga. The attack will be led by Le Vasseur. He is a good soldier, but because of our need for secrecy we haven't sufficient troops."

Hugh Greer opened and shut his powerful hands. "You Frenchmen," he said, "always find some way to favor yourselves in a deal. Tell me plain—what will happen to my lot if we refuse to fight for you?"

"You'll be given a boat and a fair supply of food and water." Fontenay spoke quite slowly, in a flat, hard monotone. "Then you'll be shoved off to do what you can for yourselves. I think you're aware most of the ships in these seas are Spanish. But pity is not a very practical commodity, and the Dons don't argue with stubborn Englishmen. They put them to the fire and the rack."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"A nice choice," Hugh Greer said. "Still, you give us a chance to die with swords in our hands."

"Against the Spanish, don't forget."

"I don't. But I must talk to my men, see if they'll become your conscripts."

"Be brief with them," Fontenay said. "Le Vasseur will be getting his force ready to land in another hour."

Anne de Poincy stood in the broad sway of shadow beneath the mainsail. "I can guess," she said as Hugh Greer slowed beside her, "what *m'sieur le chevalier* has asked of you. Are you going to fight with our force at Tortuga?"

"He offered us that, or what quite certainly would end in the Spanish torture."

"Then you'll fight?"

"Yes. But you must have known of Fontenay's plan to conscript us. He said you bespoke him in our favor, and by fighting I would return it."

SHE brushed the wind-touched hair from her face, and he saw that her eyes were very dark, very wide. "I did no more," she said, "than ask that you be saved from the sea. I had pity for your distress. . . . But why are you and your men in the Caribees? You surely knew that there is constant bloodshed and warfare here."

"At Salem," Hugh Greer said, "before we left the Massachusetts Colony, they had begun burning women as witches. They found witnesses who swore those poor folk were possessed by the devil, had the evil eye. We ventured everything to get to Providencia. There we hoped that we might—" The words broke. He rested rigidly silent, no longer looking at her.

The old, bad memories had risen in his brain. He could see the white and wild faces of the Salem town fathers, hear the crackle, the sputter of the flames, and then the screams, the screams that never seemed to end.

"But to remember that," Anne de Poincy said, "will do you no good. My mother's people are Huguenots. We have the same sort of memories. Lose them, before it is too late and you hate all men."

He turned, and suddenly his hands were out, on her shoulders. "I pray God," he said hoarsely, "that somehow I may be able to forget. And you have helped me, given me strength."

She stepped slowly aside from him, nodded towards the bow. "Pierre is there," she said. "Waiting for you. *Bonne chance.* May you soon find happiness, and peace." Then she was gone, lithe, sure-footed along the swinging deck.

"You think, maybe," Pierre Le Vasseur said, "I don't see you with her. But I do. She is my fiancée. After I am through at Tortuga I marry her. You touch her again, I touch you with my sword, square through the middle. Now go down and talk to your men. I give them jug of rum so they feel like fighting for me. They think I'm fine fellow, something I can't say about you."

"It seems," Hugh Greer said, "that you fooled my lads. They're used to being led by real men. But when the task's done against the Dons, I'll take pleasure in letting the wind out of you."

The slender sword leaped glimmering in Le Vasseur's hand. "Go talk to them, Puritan," he said. "You are unarmed, or I make you feel this right here."

"Thanks," Hugh Greer said, and laughed at him before he went down the fo'csle hatch.

The five Salem men had the rum demijohn between them on the slimy deck. "You'm sh'ld take a drink, Master Greer," big Diccon Henshaw said. " 'Tis the Dons we're asked to fight this day."

Hugh Greer stared at him and then the other men. They slouched against the fore bulkhead, wild-eyed, almost maudlin from the rum. But they still trusted him, he thought. He had saved them from the sea, and their respect for him was deep, complete.

"Listen, lads," he said. "It's my own idea we should go out against the Dons, and yon French rooster must've crowed loud to you. But we needn't fight unless you wish it. There's a boat we can have, and another try at the open sea."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"And where would ye take us in a boat?" Henshaw said. "How could we miss bein' picked up by some Don ship before we found haven?"

Big Diccon was already convinced to fight, Hugh Greer reflected, and by the look of them so were Heath and Gill. They, too, were out of Devon, had been born to consider the sword a worthy tool. But Roger Purdon and Samuel Digby were Londoners, older, more cautious, prone to long consideration before they would spill blood. "Speak, you two," he told them. "We lost everything at Providencia except our right to be called men. I've no more command over you. Here it's each lad for himself."

"I say fight," Roger Purdon said, his stub teeth showing. "No one of us wants to go back to the Massachusetts Colony, or can. The Dons gave it to us bad at Providencia. We'd be dullards not to help the Frenchies whip them. What think ye all?"

"Aye, man!" they roared in chorus, then surged up around Hugh Greer.

II

TORTUGA beach lay flat, white and empty under the midday sun. But behind it, rearing from the tangle of sea-grape and palmetto scrub, was a mountainous ridge. There the burst of smoke broke. In a whirling rush, the big round shot plunged into the sea right beside the first boat.

"Bien sur," Le Vasseur said. "It is there they have their stockade. Now the galleon answer them. You know what means *tortuga,* Puritan? That means turtle, in Spanish. The Dons, they catch turtle on the beach. Now we catch *them*—Dons, not turtle."

Hugh Greer studied him with an openly critical glance. Le Vasseur's mood of gaiety was real, he decided. The galleon was too far astern now for the people aboard to make out anyone clearly in the long line of boats. Still, the man carried the huge white silk banner with its gleaming design of gold fleur-de-lys. That would be a certain target for the Spanish in another few seconds. "What are you trying to do, Le Vasseur?" he said. "Get killed quick?"

"Death," Le Vasseur said grinning, "is one thing in life that never worry me. But now you stand back, with your men. If you are to die, I wish to kill you myself."

"Watch that mountain," Hugh Greer said.

The whole ridge of the island was fogged with flame-crested smoke. Battery after battery was firing at the boats. Gouts of water leaped spuming where the shots struck. The French pikemen and musketeers stood jammed between the thwarts, and the sailors cursed them as they rowed. Then one ball smashed a boat full amidships. It sank a splintered wreck, and where the blood slick widened sharks swerved in at the men who still lived.

"Aprés moi!" Le Vasseur shouted. "Straight ahead!" He jumped out into thigh-deep water, the banner furled in one hand, his sword raised high in the other.

There were Spaniards in among the palmettos up the beach. They let go a sweeping musket fusillade, then charged forth solidly and fast. Hugh Greer inhaled a deep breath, swung his sword blade through a practice stroke. For an instant he imagined he saw Anne de Poincy's face. She had wished him peace and happiness, he remembered. But it was men like those ahead who had killed his mates at Providencia.

Most of the Spaniards wore fine steel casques and breastplates. All of them carried dirks or swords, knew how to use them. Le Vasseur had lunged on, was surrounded by half a dozen of their leaders. He had been forced to drop the banner, but he straddled it as he fought, his feet firmly set.

Maybe Le Vasseur was a bragging dandy, Hugh Greer thought. Still, in battle the man proved his bravo words.

He went forward to Le Vasseur's side

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with his own sword whirling, slashing. A dark-faced Spaniard leaped at him, and he drove his point through until it grated against spinal bone.

Le Vasseur turned as he advanced, shouted, "They go back! We break them. See, they run from us."

The Spaniards were giving way, moving toward the jungle edge. But it was not frantic retreat. They kept together, then were suddenly gone, lost to sight in the dark green obscurity of the trail.

Le Vasseur did not wait. He called an order back to the sailors to guard the boats, beckoned the pikemen and musketeers on to the trail.

"A fool's trick," Hugh Greer said. The five from Salem had drawn around him, their sweaty faces tense. " 'Tis a reckless thing to go in there so. But our word's given to obey that fire-eater. We must follow him."

Scarlet-winged birds and big, bright butterflies slanted back and forth across the trail. One butterfly came to rest upon the folds of the banner Le Vasseur carried held wide. But none of them in the tightly closed ranks of the column watched it long; they were staring nervously forward.

A DEAD Spaniard lay a-sprawl in the middle of the trail, a beam of sunlight squarely upon him. The contorted features showed like an awful mask, and flies blackly patterned the gaping skull wound.

"Parbleu," Le Vasseur grunted, and knelt to pull the body to one side. It was as he rose that the first shot rang.

He dropped twitching, blood in a broad band along his thigh. From the front rank four men rushed to get him back, out of the sunlight. Single, separate shots killed them. Then the Spaniards charged.

They came in a score of groups and from as many different points in the jungle. The Frenchmen screamed at them and at each other, tried to break free to find space to fight.

Swords whanged on pikeshafts. Pistols tore hoarse sound through the clanging echo of muskets. The ranks were in complete confusion. Musketeers had nothing but their empty weapons to meet the Spaniards' dirks. Some of the pikemen had slashed their way to safety, but the rest were trapped. In a few minutes, Hugh Greer realized, this would be massacre.

He fought aside from the column, his sword arm aching with repeated blows. Diccon Henshaw, then Samuel Digby and the other Salem men followed him. " 'Tis no good staying here," he said. "Keep after me into the bush."

He broke through a mass of great, leafy fern, out into a glen clustered with bamboos. Behind him he heard the strained breathing of the five, and from the trail the mounting cries of agony. They were safe enough now, he thought. The Spaniards hadn't taken time to pursue them. He turned, signed for the men to halt.

"You'm got a bellyful o' such?" Diccon Henshaw said. "Me, I never see the like."

"It's a waste of good men's blood," Hugh Greer said. "Le Vasseur should have sent in scouts first."

"Aye," Henshaw said. "Le Vasseur's feckless, if generous wi' the rum. For the rest of them we have no care."

"Then let us get back to the beach," little, square-jawed Gill said. "We can take a boat quick from them Frenchy sailors, head out to sea."

"Talk sense," Hugh Greer said harshly. "We'd be run down before we'd get a furlong out to sea. The folks aboard the galleon are watching all this. Fontenay is a seasoned fighting man, and he'll be ashore here soon. The French will win; be sure of that. Our task now is to go back, fetch the sailors from the boats, and save them in the trail."

Samuel Digby squinted up from a study of a nick in his cutlass blade. "Master Greer," he said, "has led us right the whole way. In this moment, he figures shrewd enough. Ye're boobies, do ye not take his counsel."

"Step out quietly, lads," Hugh Greer said. "Or mope here 'til the French come and catch you like chickens in a coop."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But they all came after him, and he smiled at them. "It's a long road for us," he murmured, "yet the right one."

The sailors had shoved the boats into the water, were beginning to climb aboard. Hugh Greer walked out among them, drove them back to the beach with the flat of his sword. "You," he said in his broken French, "are paid to fight. Get started. Those men being slaughtered are your mates."

He had them grouped together and headed for the jungle when he heard the shout from seaward. A shallop was swinging in through the drift of smoke from the galleon's guns. Fontenay stood in the bow, and it was he who had shouted. As the keel touched, he sprang, came running up the strand.

"What's the matter?" he asked Hugh Greer. "What's happened to Le Vasseur's lot?"

"A slight mistake in judgment," Hugh Greer said. "Le Vasseur thought he had the Dons whipped. Then they trapped him in the bush. But with these men here we should set things right. You'd have me lead you to that place?"

"If," Fontenay said, expressionless, "you know the way."

"That I do," Hugh Greer said, then went ahead of him.

They could hear the crash of weapons, the yells and the screams as they entered the glen where the bamboos grew. "Right there," Hugh Greer told Fontenay. "My idea was to strike back at the Dons from the flank. It's their own style, but a good one."

"So," Fontenay said, and for the first time drew his sword. "Take your men and half the sailors, keep on to the left. I'll take the other half and go right. But wait for me to attack. There must be no more mistakes."

Hugh Greer looked at him hard-eyed. "The mistakes," he said, "were not of our doing. Le Vasseur was the man you appointed to command."

"I'm aware of it," Fontenay said, "But finish your share well here and you won't regret what comes after. My king has no law about paying Puritans well for valor."

"A bargain," Hugh Greer said. His voice was low, but clear, compelling as he gave his orders to the sailors and the Salem men.

He led them at a trot through the bamboo thickets, easing to a walk only when they were right beside the trail. It was deserted there except for a couple of badly wounded men. But a couple of yards away the Spaniards locked furiously around the surviving French.

Le Vasseur rested braced against a vast mahogany tree, the rest of the French shoulder to shoulder beside him. They defended themselves with a fierce, desperate courage. Yet after each Spanish rush several more of them stumbled down, lay kicking at their comrades' feet.

A sudden and violent revulsion came over Hugh Greer. He was sick of killing, he told himself. His eyes, his brain, were giddy with the sight of blood. It seemed that all his life was a continual carnage where men lived solely for stupid, brutal death. Then down the trail he saw Fontenay.

The broad-bodied Frenchman walked as if strolling through a park. But his sword licked out swiftly flashing and a tremendous shout came from his throat.

The Spaniards close there started at the sound, wheeled around at him. He drove them reeling, his blows hewing the trail open for the sailors behind.

"A real man, the old un," Henshaw muttered.

"He kills well," Hugh Greer said. "Now let us finish this."

HE STUMBLED once, out in the trail, and a Spaniard whipped at his head with a pistol barrel. But he jerked back from the blow, cut the man down, then stood clear. The five from Salem and the sailors had gone on, joined the survivors about the tree. Fontenay's force blocked the further trail, held both flanks.

The Spaniards were trapped. They rec-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ognized the fact one by one. The weapons lowered in their hands. The taut look of battle fury left their faces, and they stood dull, slack, blinking at Fontenay.

"Put down your arms," he told them. "You will be treated with honor." Then he came forward to Hugh Greer. "Have your men stack the Spanish arms," he said. "I'll leave the men by the tree as a guard for the prisoners. The rest of the troops I shall need to take the fort up above. As soon as that is in my hands, I'll send back a messenger and you can start moving all this lot there."

"How about Le Vasseur?" Hugh Greer said.

"He will stay here, too. But you are directly responsible to me, and not to him. Understood?"

"Fully," Hugh Greer said.

He brought the Spaniards into a loose group after Fontenay and the sailors were gone. "Stack all their arms in one pile," he commanded the Salem men. "Give as much care to their wounded as to the Frenchmen. There's been enough of suffering."

But then he noticed Le Vasseur. Le Vasseur still rested braced against the tree trunk, talking rapidly to the French soldiers about him. They answered what he said with harsh curses, and the men who carried muskets began to reload them.

"Not that!" An almost insane note had entered Le Vasseur's voice. His face was stark, haggard. "Fontenay would hear the shots, be back before we're done. One of you go to the boats, get a rope. Then we'll string up all the swine right here."

A big brass-mounted pistol lay in the trail before Hugh Greer. He reached and took it in his hand. It was charged, he saw, primed to fire. "Run, Diccon," he murmured to Henshaw. "Find Fontenay and fetch him back. Le Vasseur couldn't whip the Dons, so he's just proposed to hang them."

Diccon Henshaw sprang fast through the high screen of ferns. But one of the French soldiers nearly got him with a pike thrust. "Drop it," Greer told that man. "Stand over with your mates, or I'll kill you!" Then, as the pike pitched down, he trained the pistol muzzle square on Le Vasseur's chest.

"What's got you, Puritan?" Le Vasseur said. "Stop us, and we'll hang you, too. Five minutes ago, you fight the Spaniards. Now you defend them. Why? Because you think Mademoiselle Anne likes you for having a soft heart, or Fontenay gives you a lot of gold?"

The desire to kill Le Vasseur was so profound that Hugh Greer could not speak. It took all his power of will to keep from pulling back the trigger. You can't, he thought. If you killed him, there'd be another general fight here and a lot more good men would lose their lives.

But Le Vasseur was hobbling from the tree. "I'm wounded," he said. "No match for you. Here's your chance at me."

Hugh Greer made a slow, slight sign to the Salem men with his free hand. They strode to stand in a line where he had indicated, behind him, and between the Spaniards and the French. Then he swiftly leaned forward and hooked an uppercut to Le Vasseur's jaw.

Le Vasseur fell soundless. It was the other Frenchmen who yelled, and a big musketeer who tried to shoot him as he jumped across Le Vasseur. He let the musketeer have the pistol ball high through the shoulder. The shock knocked the man around, staggering among his mates.

Then Hugh Greer had the pistol reversed, and his sword out. The sharpness of the blow, the feel of his knuckles against Le Vasseur's flesh, had given him back his power of speech. *"Vous avez tort,"* he said. "Fontenay wished you to treat the Spaniards with honor. Listen—there he is."

Fontenay was a pace in front of Diccon Henshaw. He held a green bamboo ripped from the jungle. Without warning or word, he used it on the French soldiers until it cracked in his hands. Then as swiftly as he had begun, he stopped. "Form column," he commanded. "Pick up your wounded

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and the Spanish wounded. If any of you fails to obey me, you'll all be given twenty years of prison."

He waited for them to obey him before he squinted at Hugh Greer. "You're possessed of a fair amount of sense, Puritan," he said. "And certainly a bit more than the man I sent ashore to lead you. . . . The fort's been taken; the cannonading from the galleon finished it. We'll go there now so the wounded can be tended. Tell a pair of your lads to carry Le Vasseur. His life is precious to a number of people in France, if not to me."

"He's tried sore hard," Hugh Greer said, "to lose it here."

"Later, we'll talk again of that," Fontenay said. He turned then, motioned the column forward along the trail.

III

AT SUNDOWN a breeze came in off the sea, and slowly the wounded were quiet. Softly murmurous night noises filled the fort compound. Where the men from Salem sat beside their cooking fire they could no longer see the rows of dead, the jagged gaps in the stockade walls. Below on the black sea the galleon lay easy-heaving at anchor, her lights casting radiant spokes inshore. Greer watched that and the vast blue bulk of Hispaniola beyond, so tired that no thought was definite in his mind.

But Diccon Henshaw hunched up and asked, "What now for we uns, Master Greer?"

"Tell him," little Gill said, "that the French king'll give him a duchy for the way he fought today. Aye, and a strapping wench straight from court as his duchess."

"Ye may mock Diccon," Roger Purdon grunted. "But 'tis a good question, all the same. This day we've had our due from the Dons for what they gave us at Providencia. We're no lads to stay soldiers of the French for any time. Somehow, we'm sh'ld find a way to venture out from here and make a holding of our own."

None of them spoke after that. They were waiting for him, Hugh Greer thought. He looked around at them in the firelight glim. Each one of them was a good man, he decided. Once more today they had proven their steadfast courage.

"Lads," he said, "I'm not sure what now's the best course for us. Your asking, though, has brought to me the thought that we never should ha' come South to the Caribbees. Our place is somewhere in the colonies. Our blood isn't the sort for this heat, our skin for this sun."

"'Tis a better heat," Samuel Digby said, "than that put about the poor uns called witches in Salem town."

"True," Hugh Greer said. "Never shall we go back to that. But the America is a great country. I remember me the Indians talking about land to the West, where there's forests like none in England, and lakes as great as seas, rivers that go for thousands of miles. There a man could find space to fashion his own life, worship his God as he sees fit."

"We'll fly, then," Gill said, "like eagles to that country? You must be proper tired from today's fight, Master Greer. Else you'm would know full well men like us cannot go there without we have a strong boat to take us across the sea, and plenty tools and provisions for the wilderness."

Hugh Greer smiled at him. "I've thought of such things," he said. "And now, if you so will it, I shall go ask Fontenay for them. He's given me to understand that since morning we've served him very well."

"We will it," they said, and raised their hands separately, as if they were at Puritan meeting.

Fontenay was in the guardroom by the gate. He was counting Spanish gold pieces, a cluster of moths about the candle flame. "Have patience for a moment," he told Hugh Greer, "then I'll be done. Some of the Don captain's wine is there in the flagon. Try a bit; it's fine."

The wine made Hugh Greer cough, and Fontenay stared up at him. "Too strong for you?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'm not a drinking man," Hugh Greer said. "Seldom do we Puritans touch the stuff."

"I recall so," Fontenay said. "You people really love a good handful of gold above anything else."

"'Tis of that I came to talk to you," Hugh Greer said. "My men are desirous of leaving here, making a venture alone."

"*Certainement,*" Fontenay said. "You've had your share of the Dons. You should be paid for your service to us, given a boat and supplies. But where would you go?"

"Back to America. Along the coast until we find some river to our liking, and then into the interior."

FONTENAY slightly shrugged. "I have coasted all that land. And I tell you earnestly that to set out for there now in any kind of small craft would be foolhardy. The hurricane season starts next month. To escape the storms you would have to head west, right into the Spanish settlements. Keep on north, and for hundreds of miles there is nothing but a wilderness of fever swamp."

"What," Hugh Greer said, "are you trying to prove to me? That my men and I should stay here?"

"Just that. Tomorrow, the galleon must go on to Martinique. I can leave only a small garrison, and Le Vasseur will command it. His family have great power with the court at home. He has orders direct from the king that he shall be the governor here. But after what happened today I don't trust him. Some man like yourself should remain to put a restraint upon his actions."

"My men would never give their consent to serving under Le Vasseur. But surely you now have reason to revoke his orders from the king."

"Anne de Poincy's father is the only one in the islands who has the authority. As governor-general of all the French Caribbees he can do it. He is at Martinique, though, and it will be weeks before another man can be appointed."

Hugh Greer wryly smiled. "And in that time, if we stayed, Le Vasseur would have us hanged and quartered. Today, as you know, he had his soldiers started against us."

"I plan," Fontenay said, "to leave a number of the sailors to balance the lot. They're hard-headed lads who'll stand for no foolishness. As for the rest, they just got a solid lesson in discipline. All of them are full aware of the weight and reach of French law."

"The prospect's still not to my liking," Hugh Greer said. "Le Vasseur is a man I want to kill, not serve."

Fontenay's broad fingers stretched out over the sack of gold on the table. "The Dons possessed some few of these," he said. "You and each of your men will receive ten thousand doubloons if you stay and serve me here. Then you will be able to charter a proper vessel, make your voyage to America as should be."

For several seconds Hugh Greer sat staring at the sack of gold. Then he shook his head. "I have some small fancy for the stuff," he said. "But not much. Not enough to keep me in the same garrison with Le Vasseur for several months."

"*Trés bien, alors,*" Fontenay said, and shrugged. "But you'll advance the idea to your men?"

"It'll do no good," Hugh Greer said. "They, too, hate Le Vasseur."

He was walking slowly back through the moon-pale darkness when he saw Anne de Poincy. She stood before the tent where the wounded lay. Her body was stooped. There was no color in her face except for a wide stain of fatigue beneath her eyes. "I didn't know you were here," he told her, almost roughly. "This is no place for you."

"The *chirurgien* asked that I help with the wounded," she said. "There were many amputations to be done. Now, though, I'm through. I should like to find a spot that is swept by the breeze."

"There, on the stockade," he said. Then he gave her his hand, drew her up after him to the platform of logs.

The breeze was fragrant with the scent

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the sea, had the sound of music. Her hair was brought back from her cheeks by it, and she smiled. "I begin to feel better," she said. "Until tonight, I'd never seen men die."

"Then maybe," he said, "you doubt what France has gained by the loss of their lives."

"No," she said. "I don't doubt that. France must find herself a place in the New World. Out here, in time, people can really be free from all the old hates of Europe. But what of you? Today you fought for France. Have you gained by it?"

"Some bit," he said. "Fontenay is willing to pay us, provision a boat. Yet his serious wish is that we stay here, continue in the French service."

"And you have no fancy for that?"

"None. Pierre Le Vasseur is going to be the governor of the island. He—"

"Go on. I have been told of what happened with the Spaniards. Pierre was wrong, and you were right. You kept him from a criminal act."

"Fontenay's reason for wishing me here is to stop any such further acts. But I only know one method."

"You mean, you would like to kill Pierre Le Vasseur."

"He has brought me to a deep degree of hatred for him."

Anne de Poincy gradually turned. She placed her hands upon Hugh Greer's arms. "You're a Puritan," she said. "A man whose faith teaches gentleness, forgiveness. Can't you overlook what he has done? Your people have been persecuted in Europe just as the Huguenots have been. Here there is a refuge for them. But it will not last unless men like you are true to your own doctrines."

"You'd have me stay?" Hugh Greer slowly asked.

"Yes," she said. "We have need of you here. Great need. If you were to leave—"

But he was bringing her into his arms, kissing her with a wild, abandoned passion. "I shan't leave," he said. "I'll remain here until the day you are willing to go with me elsewhere as my wife. Now your word is mine, in all I do."

She drew trembling back from him. "You Puritans," she murmured, "are fierce when you make love. . . . But I, too, look forward to that day of which you just spoke. It's not distant; in five months, my father should have another governor here. Then we can voyage together to the ends of the earth."

IV

HE CARRIED her down from the stockade, kissed her again when they stood below. "But I must go," she told him. "The *chirurgien* is there, and the other officers returning to the ship."

"I'm aware of that," he said. "Tell me, though, that you'll come back from Martinique on the first ship."

"The first ship," she said; "my new, true love."

He rested there a long while after she was gone. If he didn't move, he thought, and kept his eyes shut, he could still believe she was beside him. Then the exhaustion of the day reached chill into his brain, and he was able to laugh at himself. "Get along, boobie," he grunted. "You'll have five full months in which to dream."

All the Salem men were asleep, he found, hunched head-to-foot about the ashes of the fire. He had taken off his sword, was rolling it in his coat against the dew, as he heard Le Vasseur.

Le Vasseur dragged toward him on a rough sort of crutch. But there were pistols in his belt, and he carried his long sword. "Stand, Puritan," he said. "I'm your governor now, and when I'm about you stay on your feet."

Hugh Greer rose only enough to clear his sword. "You may be governor right enough," he said. "But let us get this straight fast. I shan't serve you here. The man from whom I take my orders is the Chevalier Fontenay."

A taut grin pulled Le Vasseur's mouth. "Anne just tell me that," he said. "I take

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

trouble to say goodbye to her at gate. She seem quite worried when I tell her she's never going to see you again."

Hugh Greer glanced past him into the further darkness, his sword blade not yet raised. Fontenay stood there motionless by the stockade wall.

"*C'est assez,* Le Vasseur," Fontenay said. "Stand back!" Then his glance went to Hugh Greer. "You seem to have changed your mind, Puritan. You propose to stay here?"

"Yes," Hugh Greer said, "I do. But wait until I've talked to my men."

The Salem men had been roused by the sound of the voices. They sat up staring keen-eyed at Hugh Greer. "Master Fontenay," he said to them, "wants us to stay here, serve him for a while. 'Tis not a job I like overmuch, but at the end of it he'll pay us then thousand doubloons apiece. How's that as a price for patience?"

"Worth it," Roger Purdon snapped. "Then we'll be able to set out north in proper style. What thinks the lot of ye, chuckle-heads?"

"You'm given our answer for us," Diccon Henshaw said. "We'll stay." Then he and the others stretched out again.

" 'Tis so agreed," Hugh Greer told Fontenay. "But there is one more assurance I want from you."

"What's that?"

Hugh Greer nodded at Le Vasseur. "Permission to cut the craw from that popinjay if he forces me too far."

"Granted," Fontenay said, and faintly smiled. "Now I shall be going. Take care of yourself."

Le Vasseur stepped close after Fontenay was gone. His face was hard-set, mocking. "Very nice," he said, "to have Fontenay as your friend. But pretty soon you have no friends here, not even your own men. When you think of Anne, think, too, of that. . . .

IT WAS the sun that had changed them, Hugh Greer believed. He and all the Salem men seemed possessed by it as by a drug. Tortuga had become a place remote from any other part of their lives. Here, they were finally convinced, was no reason for fear or even caution.

Le Vasseur gave them no trouble. He spent the whole day gaming with the French soldiers and sailors. His leg wound had healed well, and he was often drunken, always gay. After supper, he brought rum to the groups about the cooking fires, played his viol and sang.

The rest of the Salem men got into the habit of sitting on the fringes of those groups, taking a swig of rum as the pannikin was passed. He had no heart to stop them, Hugh Greer told himself, and there was small harm done. Le Vasseur's game was obvious: he wanted to erase the bad will he had created in the fight against the Spanish. But most of the sailors were Bretons, hard-headed men of long memory, and the soldiers wouldn't be quick to lose the lesson Fontenay had taught them with the bamboo.

Hugh Greer gave more and more time to musing of his future with Anne. They would go north, he decided, to Canada or some land like that. Snow was what he wanted to see, crisp and glistening, and miles of black-frozen water, lakes where the ducks settled in the sudden spring, and the big red deer came down to drink. He was a north country man, and let the others have the steamy heat, the great, brassy sun that beat the brains out of you. . . .

Then late one night as he lay trying to sleep, his thought full of Anne, he heard a slight sound at the gate.

It was being opened, and Le Vasseur opened it.

He got silently to his feet, made sure his sword was clear before he followed. The men of the watch slouched snoring against the stockade. "You're fools," he whispered half aloud, "but I'm a much bigger one."

He lost Le Vasseur a hundred yards down the trail to the beach. It was dangerous, useless to go any further, he realized. He turned and went back to the fort.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But there he climbed to the top of the watch-tower above the stockade. The jungle stretched solid to the sea, the only light the bluish glimmer of the fireflies. The sea was black beneath a black, starless sky. He stared across to Hispaniola.

One immense fire raised a straight, scarlet glow upon a headland. Then the glow suddenly dimmed, raised again. That was a signal, he thought. Some man or men sent signals so to Tortuga.

He waited, not watching that fire any more, but the sea before Tortuga. The answering flame cast a radiance quivering out over the beach swells. It rose and fell in the same fashion as the fire on Hispaniola, and was twice repeated.

A curious and impersonal rage took hold of Hugh Greer. There were powerful Spanish garrisons not fifty leagues away to the south, he recalled. Bands of men called buccaneers, renegades of half a dozen nations, roamed the hills right across the strait. And Le Vasseur was in communication either with the Spanish or the buccaneers. Despite his blood, despite his whole background, Le Vasseur was a traitor.

Diccon Henshaw was awake. His sleep had been broken, he said, by a mosquito as broad-beamed as a Yarmouth brig. But his eyes were grave as he said that, and then he asked, "What you'm been doin', up this time o' night, Master Greer?"

"Rouse the rest of them," Hugh Greer said. "You all should know."

He talked fast then, his sword gripped tight between his knees. "Mind you," he ended, "I'm not sure. This is only my guess."

"Seems like, though," Roger Purdon said. "Ain't no other reason for a man to be makin' fire signals to an enemy shore. But what you think we sh'ld do?"

"Wait," Hugh Greer said, "until we're sure. Fontenay gave us a duty here, and we can't fail him."

"Somethin' about a lass in it too, for you, maybe," Gill said, unsmiling. "But we're with you, Master Greer. We'll stick. Tomorrow we'll know for certain, and then's time enough to rig Le Vasseur's jib. Now fetch yourself some sleep. Us can keep a watch."

He tried not to sleep, but at last his eyes drew shut and he hunched down in a doze. The Salem men talked low-toned around him, and he imagined it was Anne's voice. He and Anne were in the north country. They stood at the door of a cabin they had built themselves. The fields before them were their own, and beyond the clearing was land no other whites had ever seen. Then Diccon Henshaw murmured, "Best get up, I reckon. Le Vasseur's just come in the gate."

A MANGO tree set a shining mass of leaves against the sun beside the gate. Some of the soldiers sat there gambling, and Le Vasseur knelt among them. "Name your play," he said. "The dice are mine."

"Let the play go," Hugh Greer said, slowly walking forward. "I want a word with you."

Le Vasseur tilted his hat higher and laughed. "The Puritan has fear for your morals, troopers," he said.

"I've only fear," Hugh Greer said, "that you are a traitor. What do you seek to do, give this island to the Spanish, or the buccaneers?"

Le Vasseur was erect. He stood clear from the soldiers, but he did not touch the pistols in his belt. "Come with me, Puritan," he said. "Up on the stockade."

Hugh Greer looked back once as he climbed the stockade ladder after him. The Salem men rested close together, he noticed, and each of them held a musket. Then he heard Le Vasseur. "Look there, out to sea," Le Vasseur said.

The sea was unflawed sapphire. Across it from the direction of Hispaniola a fleet of canoes breasted. They were filled with men, and the morning sun brought a sheen from the weapons in their hands.

"Those must be the lot," Hugh Greer said quietly, "that you signalled last night."

"Exacte," Le Vasseur said. "They're

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

buccaneers, come to join me. On Hispaniola, the Spaniards are too strong for them. But here they will be safe. You like to call me traitor now?"

"No," Hugh Greer said. "Now there's no reason."

"But don't try to make your men fight or run away, Puritan. You do, the buccaneers catch you, very quick. Then all of you get roasted just like pigs."

Hugh Greer held his voice at the same calm level. "Thanks," he said, "for the advice. Still, I can't quite understand your desire for keeping us."

"Very simple," Le Vasseur said. "Fontenay comes back here in a couple of weeks. Maybe he won't think you make good hostages. But *la petite* Anne, she will . . ."

The buccaneers came in a steady, rapid file into the fort. There were several hundred of them, and at once they cowed the bewildered French.

They were lean and fierce men with the flat glint of death in their eyes. Their weapons and clothing were a fantastic confusion. One man, a long-legged Carib, wore a woman's velvet gown ripped off at the knees, held an old style halberd. Beside him was a Portuguese or Spaniard who wore no shirt and filthy nankeen pants stuffed into a splendid pair of Cordoba boots. Among the others were Scots in ragged kilts with leather targets on their arms, huge Claymores at their hips.

But they all halted, grinned when Le Vasseur had a cask of rum rolled out into the compound for them. Le Vasseur filled the first tankard himself, lifted it high. "To us!" he said. "And to the free island of Tortuga!"

"Be still," Hugh Greer muttered to the Salem men. "Make no sign you've heard."

The Salem men had put aside their muskets, but each of them still had his cutlass. "Master Greer," Gill said, swinging forth his own blade, "we've listened to ye, and to him. But yon set of gentry are about as peaceful as wolves let fresh into a sheep-fold. They're the sort who love killing for the sport of it. Given a bit more rum they'll be over after us. We're the only lads who'll stand and fight."

"I know that," Hugh Greer said. He was staring at the buccaneers and at the lot of scared French backed up against the wall. "Yet there's hope for us. These men who call themselves buccaneers are much the same as us. They're outcasts from their home lands, too; and Le Vasseur has brought them here by telling them the place is free. So I'm going to challenge Le Vasseur, ask that he fight me in fair duel for our liberty."

"Why you?" Diccon Henshaw said.

"Because I'm the one who got you into this. And because all of us can't fight them. So listen to me. If Le Vasseur fights me, or if he doesn't, start over the wall as soon as I challenge him. Head for the beach. Take the first boat you find there. Then your course is south by east for Martinique. I trust you'll reach it. Tell Fontenay what's happened, and that he'd best bring his galleon here fast. You may also give Miss Anne de Poincy an expression of all my love."

"Lad," Samuel Digby began, "you're pitchin' your life—"

But Hugh Greer was already several paces away across the compound. His sword was clear and he raised it at arm's length to the buccaneers as he shouted, "I bespeak every one of you. I'm a Puritan from the Massachusetts Colony, a man lost like yourselves. But the dandy who's the governor here would make prisoners of me and my mates. I tell you now I'd rather die than have that. So I dare him to meet me in fair fight for my liberty!"

ONE of the Scots howled in answer, then nearly all of them. Le Vasseur had been standing by the rum cask, a freshly filled tankard in his hand. It slipped, slopped rum over his boots. "Why dinna ye fight, mon," a Scot said. "As 'tis, ye're wastin' gude rum."

Le Vasseur hurled the tankard from him and cursed in French, Spanish, English. "You force me to fight scum," he said.

"Easy wi' that," the Scot said. "We've

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

heard the word before. Is it ye're afraid to fight?"

A kind of low laughter came from Le Vasseur. The slender sword whipped from the scabbard and he leaped straight at Hugh Greer.

There was no time to parry, Greer realized. Le Vasseur was the faster, better swordsman. He took a side step from Le Vasseur's blade, began to drive him back. He went in wide open time and again, utterly careless, thinking solely to kill. In this moment he saw the other not only as his personal enemy, but a symbol of all the evil forces in his life. Compound in the man were unbridled ambition, the cruelty and wilful selfishness of inherited power.

He was pricked in the shoulder twice, went down beneath the second thrust. But he came up in a driving rush, held Le Vasseur off until some of the pain loosed. That gave him strange clarity. Take your time, he thought: You're sure to be killed this way. And you have to live for Anne, or at least long enough for the lads to get over the wall.

Then he heard the shots and yells from the wall. There were more yells than shots, and suddenly they stopped. He looked around for just part of a second.

The Puritans were not inside the stockade. They had got over the wall, and now they—

Le Vasseur's point took him below the collar bone. He felt it like a searing flame. It paralyzed all the upper part of his body. His sword dropped, and as he sagged down Le Vasseur kicked him.

He saw Le Vasseur through a grayish swirl of agony. The man reared gigantic above him, and the blade of the descending sword was as wide as a hand. But somebody stopped that. A figure that was no more than a wavering blur blocked him from Le Vasseur.

"Let be, Frenchy." It was the Scot speaking. "He fought ye well enough. There's no need to spit him when he canno' raise off the ground."

Darkness descended then upon Hugh Greer from all sides. The figures merged, and all sound was the roaring within his head.

He rose to consciousness to see sunlight through a thatch roof. Light and shadow stippled the dirt floor, and for a long time he did nothing but mark their slow change. Then the entire pattern was broken as a door opened.

A man who wore what had once been a kilt stood there. His face was a gaunt wreck, and one corner of the mouth was deformed by an old scar. But Hugh Greer recognized the voice, smiled hearing it.

"Ye're slow aboot dyin'," the Scot said. "Now I've belief that ye'll live. What is it due to, mon, readin' o' the Gude Book?"

"The parsons," Hugh Greer said, still smiling, "call it faith."

"Arragh," the Scot said, and came in and shut the door. "But get over 'a the blather. I'm here only to see if ye're fit for some food."

"Some fruit would do me fine. And if you could leave a jug of water here."

"Them things I can do, sure."

"Perhaps, also," Hugh Greer said, "you might tell me about my mates. Did they get away?"

"Safe and fast," the Scot said. "They took one of the big canoes, an' were chased 'e'en to the far side o' Hispaniola."

Hugh Greer lifted up a bit on his good arm. "I should like to know your name," he said, "so that I may put it in my prayer of thanksgiving."

"'Tis Davey, just that an' no mair. Leave it out, though, from any o' your prayers. An' make no attempt to be friends wi' me. I know full well as Le Vasseur what it means for us if them lads reach Martinique."

"The French would've come here anyhow."

"But not warned," Davey said. "Warned, they'll probably be able to land here wi' a force big enough to take the place. Lie quiet, though, and I'll come an' feed ye when I can. Le Vasseur's not only sorry ye're not dead. He's about ready to torture ye slow an' thoughtful. Since

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

your mates got away he's fair been off his head."

"I have no fear of him," Hugh Greer said.

"Then ye will," Davey said sourly.

V

LE VASSEUR came the next day. He reeked of rum, staggered as he walked. But as he sat down beside Hugh Greer his eyes became steady, thoughtful, and he took out his sword, fingered the blade. "They stopped me from killing you, Puritan," he said. "For that I'm glad now. You remember when you say goodbye to Fontenay? You remember what you tell him about me?"

Hugh Greer kept silent.

"You tell Fontenay," Le Vasseur said, "you cut my craw out. But you're wrong. I'm the fellow who does that. I do it with this sword, and any time I feel like. Then, when Fontenay comes here, I send you out to his ship, just for a little joke. Think about how much you want to say to Anne. Think how long she's going to love you, without any tongue."

The fine edge of Hugh Greer's control broke then, and he writhed around, tried to strike at Le Vasseur. But Le Vasseur prodded him back with the sword, and his laughter filled the hut as he rose. "Sing a hymn, Puritan," he said, "while you still got your tongue."

Hugh Greer came to dread every footfall he heard after that. He flinched as Davey brought him his food, and his teeth screeched as he tried to check his gasping breath.

"I warned ye," Davey said. "Le Vasseur's not only a tough but a bad mon. But ye ha' got the shakes awful. What would ye—rum, or a Bible?"

"A Bible," Hugh Greer said, tears of rage at his own weakness running down his face.

He was better when he had the Bible. It was a huge volume with brass-bound edges—taken from an English ship wrecked off Hispaniola, Davey said.

But Le Vasseur kicked it across the room the first time he saw it. "If you're strong enough to lift that," he said, "I fix you so you can't move. Tomorrow, you have nice iron chain to hold your hands."

"No," Hugh Greer said. "Let me at least—"

Le Vasseur put the sword point against his throat. "You want I cut off just a little piece of your tongue, to begin?"

The chain the drunken armorer attached was part of an old anchor cable. Le Vasseur came to see the job done. "Tight," he kept saying. "Make the bands tight."

The armorer spat and stared at him. "You want them any tighter," he said, "you do it yourself."

Hugh Greer struggled for three days and nights to slide one hand free from the massive iron wrist band. His wrist was chafed to the bone before he got it free. He had reached the borders of his sanity, he knew. Only the strong, beautiful, simple words there on the printed page could save him.

He read through part of that night by moonlight, rested his eyes practicing slipping his hand in and out of the band. At dawn he began to read the Twenty-third Psalm. Then, far off, faint as a thunder squall rumble, he heard a gun.

The sound was repeated many times, got closer, mounted in intensity. That was the galleon from Martinique, he told himself. His prayers were being answered.

He went a little bit out of his head then, yelled and strained against the chain to free his other hand. Davey came to the door to curse him. "Stop, ye loon," Davey said. "Were ye to put a stopper on the noise, perhaps Le Vasseur would forget ye. But he's laying a fuse to the powder magazine right outside here. He swears he'll blow the whole lot of us to hell unless we drive Fontenay's troops back into the sea."

Hugh Greer leaned over to stare through the door. Men ran past carrying powder casks and shot. Le Vasseur stood among them, dressed in a suit of scarlet velvet, an aigret-plumed hat. But in his hands he held a fuse end, and steel and flint.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Remember," he called out in a high, cracked voice. "We don't surrender. We win, or die." Then he dropped the fuse end, strode over to the hut.

He glanced glaze-eyed at Davey. "Get out," he said.

"But ye need not be too rough wi' him," Davey said. "He fought ye fair."

"Get out!" Le Vasseur said, and this time the sword was in his hand.

Hugh Greer had dreamed the scene for weeks. Now he almost doubted the reality. Outside, the ground shook with the plunging impact of the galleon's round shot. The barricade was being battered apart; men screamed dying there. But Le Vasseur was bending over him. Le Vasseur's throat was very close.

THE motion he made he had practiced until it was reflexive, absolutely certain. He grasped Le Vasseur's throat with the hand made strong by holding the great Bible. Then once, solidly, he brought the heavy links of chain down upon the sword.

The blade snapped beneath that. Le Vasseur dropped the hilt, tried to rip the locking fingers from his throat. His breath came fast, hot, then slowly coughing. Hugh Greer knew he was dead when the body thrashed out rigored in the last convulsive violence.

He gazed at his hand after he had taken it away. He felt no emotion, no sensation except a vague relief. Now, he told himself, he could get up and leave this hut.

It was as he came out into the open air that the reaction caught him. Glancing back, he had seen Le Vasseur's boot heels oddly angled, and the sight of them made him violently sick.

But huge round shot whirled past him with a yowling roar. The hut was gone, and where it had been was a dusty hole. He straightened a bit, aware that somewhere a man was shouting his name.

Diccon Henshaw was coming toward him through the smoke, and the other Salem men followed Diccon. A lot of French were behind, swarming over the rear wall. Greer staggered toward Diccon.

Hugh Greer gave Diccon a smiling nod. "You've done well," he said. "But there's the fuse to the powder magazine. Tell them we have that and they'll surrender. They know what it means. Le Vasseur fixed it himself."

"Aye," Diccon said. "I reckon they will. But where's he, Le Vasseur?"

"There," Hugh Greer said, and indicated the hole. "He—died as he had lived."

But Diccon took him by the arm then, led him back to the wall. "Fontenay's on the other side," he said. "And the young lady. She came right along. That's why Fontenay didn't clamber in with us."

Fontenay stood with Anne under a ceiba tree. Hugh Greer looked only at Anne. He stumbled as he reached her, and she held him in her arms. "You've won," she whispered. "We've won. Now it's all over. They're surrendering."

"God is good," he said. He stayed a moment in her arms, thinking of the road he had traveled in so short a time. The witch-burnings, the Spaniards, the sea; the Spaniards again, and the dog of a Le Vasseur. What had seemed a senseless piling up of violence and terror and the shedding of blood, now became a clearly marked sequence, with reason to it and continuity and a kind of climbing to an end. He had learned, slowly, painfully this thing: A man dare not flee from ferocity and tyranny; he must face them, fight them, and conquer.

A long road, it had been, but the right one; he felt sure of that now. Once more —quite literally this time—the Bible had saved him. And now—

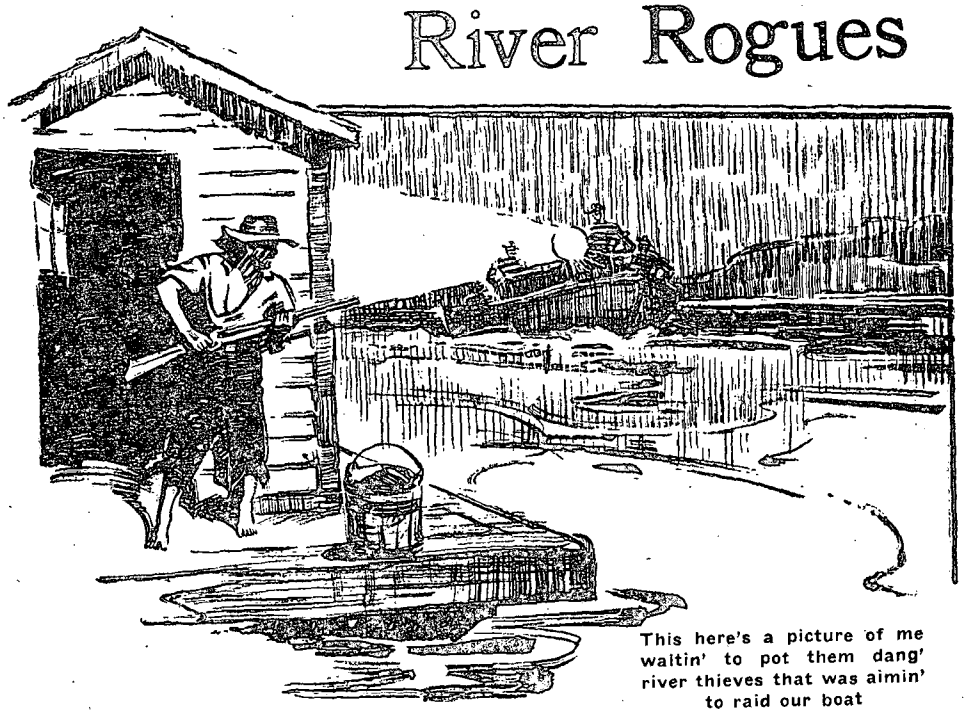
"God grant this means an end of killing," he said, and glanced around at Fontenay. "I should like to have one man saved, and freed. He's a Scot named Davey."

"And what might you do with him?" Fontenay said.

"Convert him," Hugh Greer said. "Today, he learned the worth of the Good Book."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

River Rogues



This here's a picture of me waitin' to pot them dang' river thieves that was aimin' to raid our boat

By FRED MacISAAC and C. W. HARKINS

NOW thet Al and Bellvee air married and I'm goin' off to school, they said I should write down our adventures on the River, and about the trouble we had with Doc Biglow, who warn't no doctor a-tall but jest a gambler and a politishun and boss of the river-thieves. Al and Bellvee said for me to set it down in my own words; 'ceptin' they fixed it up some where they air talkin', on account they'd be embarrassed to have folks think they really talked that way. So here goes:

After my step-maw marries the pow'fulest jug-toter on the River, I ups and leaves her and pretty soon I meets Al—that's Al Westcott—who says he's some rich man's son out to see the world. I don't believe that exactly, but Al's nice and we git along together. We jine up and buy a shanty-boat on Al's note, and Al names it the *Puddle Duck*, which I think is a sorta silly name. Purty soon a big black man, named Hoss, the most entertainin' and argufyin' nigger you ever see, he come along too.

EVERYTHING'S dandy until Al meets this Bellvee Patterson and falls in love with her, right smack-dab like that. She's runnin' away from Biglow who claims he's married her legal. *She* claims the only reason she ever got mixed up with Biglow in the first place is that he's got some kind of hold over her brother. But she didn't figger on staying married to Biglow, a-tall.

This cheers Al up some and we try to get her brother away from Biglow's men. The on'y tangeble result of this is to git both Bellvee and her brother kidnaped and to land Al and me in jail with busted haids. But Al soon proves who he is—and I was purty surprised to discover that Al's father really is the lootennent-governor of the hull state.

Through a private detective that he's hired, Al finds out that Bellvee's pa left her and her brother a lot of money when he died, although the two of them don't know it yet. Al figgers that Biglow wants to kill Bellvee's brother so that she'll inherit his share, and then maybe kill off Bellvee too, so he'll git all of it.

Al also figgers that the only place Biglow could have taken them is the shell-camp downstream. So we decide to go and look around. Al thinks it would be smarter to split forces, so he leaves us, and Hoss and

This story began in the Argosy for August 26

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I take the *Puddle Duck* down river to the camp.

Hoss, he ain't been in that camp more'n two minutes 'fore he starts actin' nervouser than three thousand ticks. "Dey's somethin' wrong 'bout this place," he says. "Ain't no black people here a-tall. 'Tain't natural."

A sorta sinister-lookin' gent comes up and asks who we are. I tells him the story Al cooked up for me to say. The sinister-lookin' gent gives me a kinda slant-eyed look and says: "Well, we'll be seein' you both later." And I don't take none too kindly to the way he says it. In fact, I'm as scairt as Hoss. Scairter. . . .

CHAPTER XVII

PEARLS AND SHELLS

AFTER breakfast I told Hoss to stick aboard while I rambled through camp. Back aways from the river were a log store, with white folks aleanin' against the wall in chairs, their dirty bare feet ankle-deep in dust. Wimmen, with skirts draggin' in the dirt behind them, were goin' in and out carryin' baskets. I could smell coal oil and peppermint.

"Have you any *Rooster Twist?*" says I to the storekeeper, a mean-lookin' feller with one eye.

He had a black man for a helper. The man what had talked to me afore breakfast were at the far end of the counter a-gassin' with two others.

Seein' me he said, "Come back here, Bud. We all want to ask you some more questions. Air your boss a regular sheller?"

"He air," says I, a-scratchin' myself, too.

"Well, who does he gather for?"

Had me there. "Oh, first one and then t'other."

"Has he a contract?"

"He ain't one to do much talkin' 'bout his business," says I, thinkin' quick. "There were a right smart time after he went to shellin' I were a helpin' his woman work a patch of corn. He'll be here soon, then you all can ask him."

"What did you say his name were?" spoke up a feller in a greasy hat splattered with fish scales.

"Brown," says I, a workin' my toe back and forth through a crack in the punchin floor.

"Well, where does he shell mostly?"

Lucky for me the mate on the *Queen City* had told me 'bout the beds at Muscatine, the largest beds on the river.

"Muscatine mostly," says I

"I don't recall no Brown. Is anyone with you besides your nigger?"

"No," says I, right uneasy.

"Well," says he, "keep your nose clean, and tell your boss we want to see him as soon as he gets here. We don't allow ever' Tom, Dick, and Harry to horn in on our beds."

Back aboard, Hoss and me 'lowed we'd take a swim. It were gettin' powerful hot. Lollin' around on the shady side of the deck, Hoss started in to play soft-like on his mouth organ.

The music got louder and better. Soon it were a-rollin' out like a church organ. It warn't no time a-tall 'til ever' kid in camp were a standin' along the bank.

I made Hoss quit. He attracted too much attention. Didn' seem to me much doin'. A woman livin' in the boat next to us told me shellin' were mostly carried on in the winter. Summers they marketed their catch and loafed, takin' it easy.

Hoss got together enough pep to take the skiff and set out a trout line.

AFTER supper I roamed 'bout camp some more. Two shacks had phonographs, and a preacher were a-holdin' a revival in a weather-beaten tent.

A big shanty boat tied in the center of the row were a grocery store and a drinkin' saloon combined. Drunks were a-singin' and a-yellin', men goin' in and out.

I could smell sour beer long afore comin' to it. In the river were a flat boat with a gasoline pump. From time to time a power boat would put in and fill up, but the flies and the stink—!

After they dredge the shells from the river they cook 'em in big vats a spell. When cool they dig out the meat and go through it for pearls. No wonder there were so many dogs.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I didn' have any luck gettin' acquainted. Hoss stuck to the boat all day. Said they warn't enough niggers in sight to get up a game. I did learn there were a camp of mostly colored folks down stream a piece.

Niggers don't go in much for shellin'; they catch fish, help in the stores, and swamp out saloons—a might' shiftless lot.

A feller had to keep his eyes open, ramblin' around. Seemed an awful long while 'til dark, and I were worried 'bout Al. He were in camp some place, but I didn' see him. Afore supper, Hosstetter rustled up an old dishpan that leaked like a sieve. Fillin' it full of dirt, he set on deck.

"I 'lows we'll appreciate a smudge by and by," chuckled Hoss. "These folks here has the shakes. 'At means skeeters."

Hoss were right; the 'skeeters were sure pesky. As Al had hid the lamp, we filled a saucer with drippin's, braided a wick from string, and rigged a drip lamp. It smoked and were feeeble, but it did.

Hoss turned in on deck, me on the roof. Al showed up after moon-set, lookin' more like a tramp than ever.

"Did you find anything?" says he as soon as he comes on boar'.

"Nary a thing," says I. "But they're a mite suspicious 'bout this 'pappy' of mine at Mussel Shoals. 'Lowed they don't let ever' Tom, Dick, and Harry workin' these here beds."

"That's where Red comes in. He gets a rakeoff."

"Did you all find out anythin' 'bout Bellvee?" says I, eager-like.

"Not a thing," says Al, "except Red has his headquarters up river. I aim to go over in the morning.

"I spent the evening here in the saloon boat. Came near getting in a fight, but I didn't learn much. I described Tony to several people and I told them I knew him up-river, but they hadn't seen him. In the morning, I'm going across the river to the other camp.

"You keep prowling around, Joe. I'll be back tomorrow night sure."

Al said he were aimin' to sleep the rest of the night on the porch of the store. Said everyone took him for a tramp who were broke. One old woman belongin' to the church wanted to give him a pone and some side meat for supper.

NEXT day a packet landed, and while they were lettin' off freight, a shell-buyer planted himself on the lower deck behind a kitchen table. I went aboard and got talkin' with the mate. He were acquainted with the pilot of the *Quincy*.

The buyer, a roly-poly kind of man smokin' a Philadelphia stogy, wore horn-rimmed specs, and had a hard hat perched on the back of his head.

On the kitchen table he stacked silver money, dollars, halves, dimes, and pennies, and bundles of bills. He had a pair of scales like steelyard, only a heap smaller, with a tray swingin' from each end of the beam by a chain.

While the roosters were a runnin' freight on one gangway, shellers were pikin' up t'other. Most were barefooted, some had on hip-boots. All wore faded, patched blue overalls and ragged shirts. None shaved. Their hair run wild.

The shellers stood in a half circle in front of the buyer a chewin' tobacco. Nobody even grunted. The buyer pushed the silver money around the table with his fingers.

Clustered at the foot of the gang were fifteen or twenty wimmen in rusty black and sun bonnets, with snuff-sticks a-stickin' out of the corner of their mouths, a-waitin' for their men folks to get done.

The men stood and chawed; finally the buyer says somethin' in a low tone. Two fellers nodded, "Yes," t'others, "No".

Three men stalked to the side of the boat and spit in the river.

The two noddin', "Yes" went upstairs to the bar, t'others jest stood and stared at the buyer. He spoke again, another nodded, "Yes" and clumped upstairs. A few slouched down the plank and elbowed their way through the wimmen.

One by one they either nodded, "Yes" and went upstairs for a drink, or "No" and left. When the men were either all at the bar a-drinkin' likker or had left

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the packet, the wimmen trailed aboard and stood silently eyein' the buyer.

Shiftin' her snuff-stick to the south corner of her mouth, a woman reached into the bosom of her rusty dress and pulled out a dirty handkerchief. Untyin' a corner, she showed three or four fresh water.

The buyer examined them with a glass screwed in his eye, weighed 'em, and handed the woman some money. Each woman sold her pearls.

The mate said it's a custom of the beds for the men to get the money for the shells, the wimmen for the pearls. The money went to buy sweets, dress goods, and hammered tobacco.

I asked him how come that when a man nodded, "Yes" he went to the bar, and when "No", he went ashore.

The mate prodded a rooster with his toe and said, "Those noddin', 'Yes' accepted the buyer's price. Others turned it down and decided to wait for another buyer. But most shells air contracted for by the large button factories."

I were kinder homesick to steam boat again 'cause I could hear the cook in the kitchen bangin' pots and pans. Everythin' were so clean and white! The Captain, in a gold-trimmed cap, were a smokin' a ten-cent cigar and lordin' it around.

Nigger firemen were a-leanin' over the rail wipin' their face with sweat rags. Midship on the b'iler deck were barrels of groceries, molasses, and cured meat. A pen of hogs were gruntin', restless-like. Roustabouts were a-sleepin' on piles of freight; from the engineroom I could hear the soft purr of steam. Niggers were laughin' and cuttin' up in the hold. One were a-playin' a jew's-harp.

CHAPTER XVIII

DEPUTY

I WENT ashore when the pilot tapped the big bell. The packet back-watered and slowly a space opened between me and the boat. A jingle in the engineroom, a wash of muddy water, and the pilot headed her for a crossin'.

Black smoke streamed from her tall twin-stacks, and the mate's voice, a-cussin' natural-like, died away as she straightened out up river.

Shellin' is right interestin'. An old-time buyer who took to drink were a settin' on an empty beer-keg in the front of the saloon boat. After he begged a chaw off'n me, me and him got to talkin'. He 'lowed he'd been buyin' shells up and down the river for over thirty years.

The buyer absent-mindedly handed me an empty gallon tomato-can and nodded toward the bar. 'Lowed a dime would neither make me or break me, so I bought.

"Yes sir," said the buyer, wipin' the foam offen his mustache, "now right here in the Mississippi Valley they make over three hundred million buttons a year from mussel shells. The mussel air a tremendous family as there air over a thousand different species, and the biggest mussel beds in the world are located within a two-hundred-mile stretch right in old man river."

He sloshed the beer around in the can with an absent-minded look on his face. "Yes sir, in my time I've bought thousands of tons of shells, bushels of low-grade pearls, and now and then, one that were worth a small fortune."

He took another pull at the can. "Muscatine is the center of the shell button industry. Notice that pile of shell over there" —p'intin' to a heap all of a hundred yards long, "—small and dark-colored, smell to high heaven, but they provide buttons for all babyhood.

"Thousands of men work in the ice and slush of winter gatherin' them; thousands of wimmen cook 'em so as they can take out the meat; boys and girls paw and work the meat for fresh-water pearl."

"Do the wimmen find many pearls?"

"Yes, they do," replied the buyer, "but as a rule they are small, poor-colored, and nearly worthless, but I have known a few cases where pearls have been found that brought huge sums.

"Somehow, pearlers don't seem to get much good out of money. As a rule the old man would get on a toot and stay

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

drunk; his wimmen folks would light out for St. Louis or Memphis and go crazy over clothes.

"Nearly always they'd turn up in camp within a short time, pappy a-shakin' and on the edge of the snakes, and maw and the girls with two or three trunks of fixin's, but broke flatter'n a flounder."

I bought another can of beer.

LEAVIN' the buyer nursin' his beer, I figgered I'd prowl 'bout camp a spell. Seemed impossible for Bellvee to be hid in a place where all the doors were open, with kids, dogs and grown folks a-swarmin' in and out.

Didn' see that up-river bunch either. A couple of fellers in the grocery store were talkin' 'bout the gang boss, but I couldn' get the details.

Hoss and I had supper after dark on account of the flies. Didn' light the lamp. Then we swum a spell to cool off and sat around listenin' to Hoss's stories. Had a dozen gals to hear him talk, scattered from New Orleans to St. Louie.

"Did you ever marry?" says I.

"Sure," says Hoss, "but it didn't take. It were in Memphis. We'd no more 'an gotten settled til her husband, who left her and j'ined the army, turned up."

"Then what?"

"Nothin'," says Hoss. "I just takes my foot in my hand and lit out, but I sure had a streak of hard luck. A colored friend of mine were a-livin' on the banks of a bayou gatherin' moss for the market.

'I 'lowed I'd spend a week or two with him and 'en get me another job steam boatin'. I got plumb fed up on fish. He 'lowed he knew where chickens were roostin' in a tree and warn't no dogs. Come a night with no moon, we ambles over, sorter speculatin' 'bout them chickens a roostin' high.

"I left him squattin' in the corner of a rail-fence, and shinned up a tree. Out of maybe a thousand branches on that swamp oak I has to pick me out one that's rotten. Me and the old rooster hit the ground together. I bounced.

"Afore I got my breathin' arrangements a-workin', a white man comes a-plungin' out and pulls down on me with a Civil War carbine. I woke up in jail.

"They took me afore a nigger justice; had a tuft of white wool over each ear and a dusty complexion. My friend showed up to help out. His honor were sittin' behind a deal table with a pair of steel specs, without glass in 'em, on the end of his nose.

"He says, 'Nigger, you air charged with chicken stealin'. How do you plead?'

" 'Not guilty,' says I. 'I didn' steal no chickens. The limb done broke afore I could grab one.'

"The judge thumbed through a big book layin' on the table and says, 'I fine you all two dollars and forty-nine cents.'

" 'Two dollars and forty-nine cents?' I yelled. 'That's too much.'

"My friend grabbed me by the seat of the pants and hauled me outa the door into the yard.

" 'Hush your big mouth, you fool nigger, you,' he whispered.

" 'But two dollars and forty-nine cents,' says I. 'I didn' get no chickens.'

" 'Listen, Hoss, did you all notice that book the justice had? It were a Sears-Roebuck Catalog. He can't read. Just tells figgers. Did you all notice he had 'at book open at baby carriages? What if he'd opened it back among the threshin' machines? You'd be in jail from now on.' "

"Did you pay the fine?"

"No sir, the white policeman and I went muskrat huntin'."

AL DIDN' show up 'til after midnight. I didn' sleep very well. Once I heard a motorboat putterin' in mid-river, then it shut off. Al paddled in as quiet as could be.

"All right, Joe?" he whispered. "We'll go to town. Is Hoss awake?"

"He air not."

"Well, wake him up and tell him not to leave until we get back."

Al let us downstream at least a half mile afore startin' the engine. We made Brookfield at three. Night clerk at the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hotel didn' want to let us go up to Al's room, but we finally won out. I tried the bed, but nigh smothered and took to the floor.

"We won't clean up," says Al next morning. "We'll have to call on the sheriff as we are."

There were a wire from Burlington sayin' Bigłow had snuck out of Burlington on the *Quincy*.

At the sheriff's house his wife told us he were out but were expected back afore nine. We waited.

When he turned up, dead for sleep, he reported that Bud, what were the feller Al had filled full of buckshot up river, were in the hospital under arrest and wouldn' talk. Said the two deputies had covered both camps and found nothin'.

Then he lit into Al about the ruckus under the bridge. Said if we'd come to him in the first place, they'd locked the gang up, and Bellvee wouldn' have been kidnaped, and he wouldn' have to have his men wastin' their time lookin' for her.

"Guilty," says Al shamefaced-like, "but see here, Sheriff, Bellvee was afraid her brother would get into trouble."

"I don't suppose he will now that the beans are spilt," the sheriff snorted, raspin' his hand across a two day beard. "However, we've got to find her. I'm goin' to have Red picked up first thing and make him talk.

"Westcott, you beat it back to camp, comb the woods in back. It's full of shacks, some occupied, some abandoned. Many are so well hid they are nearly impossible to find. Chances are you'll find Dingo, if he's alive, and Miss Patterson at the same place. Separate.

"A young man, a boy, and a nigger air an odd combination. And don't be too sure someone hasn't recognized your houseboat even if you did change its appearance. By the way, do you tote a gun?"

"Why no," said Al, surprised-like.

The sheriff yanked open the middle drawer of his desk, pawed around, and handed Al a thirty-eight in a shoulder holster.

"Take off your coat. I'll show you how to put it on. It's a right handy rig to have," said the sheriff, standin' back and admirin' the fit of the harness.

"Most people expect you to reach for your hip pocket and air fooled. You can pull from under your arm quicker than from any other place. Us folks use this type holster for fast work. Now hold up your right hand," says the sheriff, " 'cause I'm goin' to swear you in as a special deputy."

He mumbled somethin' like the feller in the court house and handed Al a nickel-plated star.

"Put it under the sweat band of your hat. Don't show it unless you have to."

Leavin' Brookfield, we crossed to the far side and hugged the shore. As we neared the camp we passed shellers at work, so Al made me lay down in the bottom of the boat out of sight. Watchin' our chance we moored the motorboat in its old hideout.

"You take to the woods, Joe, and make the camp. I'm going to spend the day combing the bottom land as the sheriff suggested. I'll meet you tonight as usual."

But he didn'.

CHAPTER XIX

RIVER PIRATES

AT FIREFLY time, as the whippoorwills were tuned up, the *Quincy* landed. As she come wheelin' 'round the bend, the pilot tapped the bell for a landin'. 'Lowed I'd go aboard and talk with the melancholy mate.

She come in on a slant with her gang plank swingin' and the mud clerk danglin' on the end. The *Quincy* had quite a jag of freight to handle.

"Hi, Tom," says I to the mate.

He were bossin' the unloadin' of a pen of hogs. "I'll be danged if it ain't the artist," says he, proddin' a shoat with a gad. "Where did you spring from? And how's business?"

"Poorly since I've been workin' my way down from Burlington."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Well, you'd better not let the cook see you. She's off'n you for life. You jumps us sudden and under-handed as it were."

"How's you' family?" says I, changin' the subject.

"So-so," says Tom. "The oldest girl eloped with a drummer; the oldest boy is in jail; one of the young uns has the measles; and two has skipped out. Outside of that everythin' is peaceful and quiet.

"Hey, you slab-sided, ring-tailed, black ape!" he yelled at a nigger who had dropped a case of eggs. Grabbin' up the gad that were leanin' against the pig pen, he tore down the plank and just naturally made that nigger over from stem to stern.

I leaped ashore as the startin' bell jangled.

"Hi, you," hollered Tom, "don't you want to go down river?"

"Not this trip," says I, fallin' over a pickaninny squattin' in the road eatin' a banana. I were in a hurry 'cause I thought I seen Doc Biglow ahead of me. Musta gotten off'n the *Quincy* while I were a-gassin' with the mate.

On board the *Puddle Duck,* I told Hoss I believed Doc were in camp. Hoss were for untyin' and movin' right then.

I says, "Hoss, listen, we tangled with them fellers twice and come off winner. First Bud gets shot, then you knocked one of 'em in the river. Next you ups and bashes one of 'em with a rock and I'll bet he's laid up yet."

"I knows," says Hoss, "but they've done got Miss Patterson, ain't they?"

"Yes," says I.

"And they done knocked you cold as a wedge, didn' they?"

I 'lowed they did.

"And they might' nigh massacred Al. If you all calls that comin' out on top, I'd sure hate to be on the bottom. Let's get goin'."

"And leave Al?" says I.

"Not all, completely," —Hoss were squirmin'— "but we could drap down, sneak back and tell him where we be, and boy, I'd feel a heap safer."

"We stays here," I tells him.

WE DIDN' light the drip lamp that night. Hoss wouldn't sleep in the cabin, or on the roof, or on deck. He pumped out the scow, lifted the forward hatch, and crawled in.

"You'll smother down there," I whispered, stickin' my head down the openin'.

Hoss were as far aft as he could get. "I'd a rather smother here than to have klucksters a-grabbin' me, even if it's damp and smells like a coon church in July."

I waited and waited, but Al didn' come.

Didn' lie down, but set huddled with my chin on my knees and my arms wrapped 'round my legs.

In spite of myself, I'd drap off and wake with a jerk. Moon didn' rise 'til late. I musta went sound asleep 'cause when I woke, the moon were a-shinin' in my face and trees were a-movin' slowly up stream.

For a minute I couldn' make out what had happened, and then I seen we were adrift. There warn't a light in sight and everythin' were as still as death. I didn' know where we were, but I knew we were a-floatin'.

Hoss were snorin' in the hold. I crept along the roof and peered over the stern. We were in the middle of the river.

Finally I lowered myself gently to the deck and crept to a cabin winder. Didn' seem to be anyone on board, 'cept me and Hoss.

"Hoss," I whispered down the hold.

He were sleepin' light 'cause he strangled a few times and says, "Is that you, Joe?"

I could hear him creepin' toward the hatch, his eyes and teeth shinin' as he looked up out of the darkness.

"We're afloat," I whispered.

"Glory be," says Hoss, crawlin' out. "Where air we?"

"I don't know," says I, "and I don't know how long we've been driftin'."

Hoss pulled in the stern rope. It had been cut close to the shore end.

"There you see," says Hoss. "Somebody just naturally don't want ussen hangin' 'round that shell camp. They done cut us

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

loose and shoved us out quiet-like while we were asleep. And the sweeps air gone, too. How in the name of time do we all get ashore?"

Before I could figger out an answer, I heard a faint purr from up river. Tearin' into the cabin, I picked up Betsy Ann and spilled powder all over the deck loadin' her in the dark.

"They done gone and took our skiff, too," moans Hoss. "Here's where I do a mess of swimmin'."

The exhaust grew louder. A motorboat were comin' downstream without lights.

"Oh, Lordy, Lordy," prays Hoss, pullin' off his clothes. "Here's where I swim. You'd better come, too, Joe. It's 'em kluck-sters, and I sure don't want to get batted in the head."

"I'm stayin' with the *Puddle Duck,*" says I. "I've two barrels loaded with buck. Anyway, maybe it ain't them. If they wanted to get rid of us, they'd tied into us at the camp."

"You comin'?" says Hoss, gettin' ready to jump overboard.

"Not yet," says I. "Let 'em get a little closer. We're driftin' in shore. May make it before they catch us."

Hoss, naked as Adam, waited.

When the powerboat got within a few yards, a searchlight were turned on us.

"We're comin' aboard," a man hollered. It were Tony.

I WERE on the off side of the cabin with Betsy Ann poked around the corner. As Tony yelled, Hoss drapped flat on deck and eeled his way toward the hatch.

"Yes, you ornery pole cats," yelled another voice. I recognized Red. "We're comin' on board and we're comin' a shootin'."

Throwin' in the clutch with a clash, they sure made speed toward us. I could see white water a rollin' back from the bow of their boat.

I were scared and tremblin'.

I didn't in no way want to shoot a man, but made up my mind they were not comin' aboard if I could help it. Figgered I wouldn't cut down 'til they were plumb alongside.

As they circled the houseboat with the searchlight holdin' us in the center, I kept edgin' around the dark side of the cabin and didn' answer.

Stoppin' the boat within fifty feet of us, Tony called: "Listen, you boys, you've got nothin' to do with this. We'll take you ashore and turn you loose. Won't hurt you a-tall. It's the shanty boat we want."

Hoss had flopped back into the hold; his clothin' were bunched on deck like somebody were a layin' there.

"Tony," I yelled, and my damn voice changed on me. I shrilled like a woman: "If you all come any closer, I'm gonna throw a handful of buckshot in your direction. You all ain't comin' aboard this boat."

A forty-five roared. Hoss's clothes jumped in the air.

"I got him," shouts Red. "That leaves only the nigger, and I'll bet he's overboard and half way to land by now."

They started the motor and edged toward our boat.

I counted three. The searchlight raked us from end to end. Again the forty-five let go. Splinters flew from the deck. I noticed we were driftin' closer to shore.

They were all a-watchin' us and payin' no attention to anythin' else. Talkin' among themselves, they shut off the engine.

The two boats were floatin' closer together. All rattled and a-lookin' ever'which way, I seen another boat steal out from shore just ahead of us.

"Stop where you air," I screamed high-like, my voice endin' in a deep bass. "I got a bead on you all. I aims to blow that air Biglow plumb apart if you all come another inch."

If you ever seen a bunch of surprised fellers, it were them. They'd done took Hoss's pile of clothes for me.

"Back," yelled Biglow. "That kid's fool enough to shoot."

The engine went into reverse with a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thump. While we were a-yellin' at each other, the boat which were sneakin' from the bank got to within a few yards of us.

"Cut that engine," I yelled to the Biglow outfit. Had a might' good idea who were in the skiff.

Sure enough it were Al a risin' to his knees.

Then Tony seen him. I could see red fire from a gun on the power boat stabbin' the dark.

Pullin' the trigger, I caught Red with the first barrel.

He folded up over the edge of the boat, near touchin' the water with his head. As the motorboat jumped forward, someone that looked like Biglow ducked below the gunnel.

As they shot 'round the rear end of the *Puddle Duck* I cut loose t'other barrel. A mite too low. The charge splittered through the water.

Al were a-firin' as fast as he could pull the trigger but shootin' wild. Biglow's motorboat kept right on movin' through the water. No time a-tall 'till it were just a blur. Al were so excited he rammed the *Puddle Duck*, shakin' her from stem to stern.

CHAPTER XX

PUDDLE DUCK, FAREWELL

"ARE you hurt, Joe?" Al called, scramblin' aboard.

"Not so you could notice it," says I, shakin' but right proud of myself. "But I'm here to tell you and all the world that this air the limit. No more fightin' for me. Betsy Ann tore the shoulder out of me, but I done got me a redhead."

Al grabbed me and durn near cried. "What do you mean by floating down river this time of the morning?"

"I don't know. I went to sleep and when I woke up we were a-driftin'. Figgered somebody up and cut us loose then shoved us from the bank without wakin' me. Hoss is in the hold."

The moon were up now and it were nigh as light as day.

While we were a-talkin', Al were a-lookin' and a-peerin', but the river were empty. He reloaded the shotgun and I called Hoss outa the hold.

Al went to the cabin, struck a match, and were readin' a-piece of paper.

"Joe, did you see this?" he said after the match went out.

"See what?" says I.

"This note that was tacked to the cabin door."

"I didn' see no note."

"I just took it down. It says: *Keep a-goin'. You all ain't wanted in these here beds.* It's signed *The Committee.*"

Afterward, Al found out them fellows what had been askin' 'bout my papy had snuck aboard, pinned up the note and turned us adrift.

Biglow and his gang got to the landin' just in time to see the *Puddle Duck* float downstream. They took out their power boat and were aimin' to capture me and Hoss, drift the *Puddle Duck* down a-ways and fire her.

"Where are we going to put the *Puddle Duck* now?" says Al.

"Search me," says I.

Hoss were standin' on the deck lookin' at two bullet holes in his pants.

"I don't want to tow her back to Brookfield, and there's sure to be trouble if we go back to the shell camp. I'm satisfied Bellvee is in this vicinity. They're holed up some place near because Dingo will have to stay put until his head grows together again. Now the red-headed gang-boss has been added to the casualty list. Do you think you killed him?"

"As far as I could see he never made a move after bein' hit. Looked like a bundle of old clothes."

"Boss," says Hoss, fully dressed, if pants and a shirt can be called dressed, "there air a small town, not over six or seven houses, a store, and a saloon below that air shell camp. It's at the mouth of a good-sized branch. Mostly niggers and white trash. Why not tie up there?"

Al thought it over. "Have they got a telephone?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hoss didn' know.

"We'll do that. I'll get to a 'phone as soon as possible and talk to the sheriff."

IT WERE a town of tumble-down shacks huddled together. Had a log store with a porch over a sluggish creek, rotted steps leadin' to the saggin' veranda. Row boats were tied up at an old raft. We made the *Puddle Duck* fast to it.

After eatin', I took off my shirt and bailed water outa the river to clean up with. Al fiddled around, nervous and impatient.

He'd found that there were a telephone in the store and it were closed. The storekeeper opened up at eight. He were dirty, greasy, and wore a little round, red cap. Had black curly whiskers and were humpbacked. Feet in Congress Gaiters, slit to ease his toes, were long and flat and turned out like a duck's.

I'll be durned if he didn' talk like a nigger.

"I air plumb glad to see you all," he shouted over to me while I were scrubbin' the deck. "I'se everythin' you all need. How 'bout some New Orleans 'lasses?"

I yelled back I'd be over after a while. He shuffled out of sight to wait on an old woman who had brought in a mess of roastin' ears to trade.

When Al come back, he told me he'd got hold of the sheriff's office and they were goin' to send more deputies down our way. Also, Mark, the detective which Al had put on the case, had 'phoned the sheriff askin' Al to call him at a number he left. Al had called, but Mark warn't there.

Al left word for Mark to call him at the store.

"If anyone phones, answer and take the message, Joe. I'm going to Camp One. Find out where Mark is and what he wants. Give him this telephone number."

Then Al put out for the woods.

I wrastled that darn storekeeper all mornin'. First thing he done were to come aboard. I'd got the blankets back on the beds, the curtains up, the floor cleaned, and were blackin' the stove.

"Nice place you've got," says he, and then asks me a hundred questions.

I told him the same story I'd told at camp, that my pappy were at Mussel Shoals. Finally he went away.

I just got started cleanin' myself up when I were called to the 'phone by the storekeeper. It were right out where everybody could hear what I said on the phone. This Mark, the detective, said he'd lost Biglow. He'd disappeared durin' the night. I 'lowed I knew where he'd been. Mark were goin' over to Brookfield and talk with the sheriff.

Gettin' things cleaned up, I had a cold snack and took Betsy Ann down. She were might' nigh as long as me. I hung the powderhorn over my shoulder, put a sack of shot in my hip pocket, and 'lowed I'd rambled up creek a ways.

It were blisterin' hot. Butterflies were flashin', blackberries were ripe, the shade were deep, but a person couldn' enjoy themself for gnats. A long-billed 'skeeter would drill me onct in a while. Hadn't gone more than a mile, followin' a path along the creek, when I heard boys a-yellin' and a-splashin'. Kiverin' the shotgun and powderhorn with leaves, I snuck 'round the bend.

There it were—a cool, deep swimmin' hole with a dozen white and colored boys a-divin' and cuttin' up.

The pond were clear and wide; up to the shoulders of a good-sized boy. It had a springboard too, and a log raft.

I went out of my clothes and into the hole afore you could say "Jack Robinson."

One nigger boy's head were shaped like a pear. He were a downright curiosity. Had two rows of teeth in his upper and two rows of teeth in his lower jaw. It's hard enough to understand a nigger, but when he's two sets of teeth, it's nigh impossible.

They were havin' a heap of fun with him. A white boy my age could spit through his teeth. It didn' travel out strong like mine, but sailed through the air in one gob and lit twenty feet away.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I practiced for a while, but couldn't cut the mustard.

SWIMMIN' around with Hoss like I had done helped a lot. Had a race across and back and I won, but the nigger with the teeth could stay under water longer'n me.

I didn't realize I'd been in any time a-tall 'til the sun were behind the trees.

I could hear cowbells a-janglin' in the brush. A woman were a-yellin' for "Cecil." He grabbed his clothes and lit out at a gallop.

Feelin' a mite guilty, I dressed quick and hit a dogtrot back to the store. The path broke into the clearin' a hundred yards from the landin'.

I stopped dead and felt sick at my stomach. The *Puddle Duck* were gone! They'd got her at last. Even as big as I am, I all choked up. What were Al gonna say?

"Howdy, bud," the storekeeper hailed me as I stepped up to the porch.

"Where air our boat?" says I, grittin' my teeth to keep back the tears.

"Why your friends took it." He raised his eyebrows.

"What friends?" says I, starin' at the place where the boat had been.

"Your friends in a launch."

It were useless to talk to him, but I made out it warn't Al had took the *Puddle Duck*.

Al's motorboat were still there 'cause he wrapped a chain around the pilin' and padlocked it.

I jest set on the porch with my back a-leanin' against the logs. There I were, no money, no clothes, and the old *Puddle Duck* gone. I were hungry, too. There were a barrel of creek water at the end of the porch and a dipper hangin' from a nail above it. I filled up; it poked my belly out, but didn' do no manner of good.

Hoss footed it in just after dusk. I didn' see him 'til he were starin' pop-eyed at the landin'.

"She's gone," Hoss whispered to hisself. "Plumb gone."

"Best set down here 'side of me, Hoss."

"The dirty, ringtailed skunks," says Hoss, a-lowerin' hisself beside me. "They have done gone stole our only home. What air we all gonna do now?"

"We'll just have to wait 'til Al turns up. You got any of that two dollars left?"

Hoss jest looked at me sad-like.

Then he says, "You reckon we all could talk the storekeeper outter a mess of cheese and crackers?"

Lookin' through the store winder a spell I concluded it wouldn' work. Hoss and I didn' find much to say. Felt too bad.

I 'lowed it were the end. First Bellvee then the *Puddle Duck*, and away too much shootin' and fightin'.

Al and me starts out to make a trip to New Orleans. Hadn' come no-ways a-tall and outside of swimmin' a time or two and Hoss's mouth organ, it warn't no fun.

"You all aimin' to stay here the night?" says the storekeeper, lockin' the door.

"Yes sir," says I, "or at least 'til Al returns."

"No smokin'." The store keeper shook his finger. "And no monkey business. I live handy and I'm a light sleeper."

HOSS and me didn' dare leave for fear of missin' Al. Perched over the muddy bank of a creek is no way to spend a pleasant evenin'. We drunk water outter the barrel. A nigger air cheerful as long as his belly is full, but when a nigger air hungry, he's sure sad, and by and by he air plumb worthless.

After flounderin' awhile, Hoss set down and commenced talkin' of what he'd like for breakfast.

Then he talked of what he'd get for breakfast if we had the money. He started with grits and sweetenin', added flannel cakes, more sweetenin', fresh side meat, fried 'taters. Said he even had an uncle who drunk ketchup in his coffee. When Hoss got to the hot cat and fried chicken, I said:

"If you all don't shut up, I'm goin' to wrap this here gun-barrel 'round your neck and tie a bow knot in it."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Al got in at early day. Didn' take me no time a-tall to tell him what had happened.

"I'll get them," says he, tearin' mad. "There's a warrant out for them all. Every deputy in two counties is looking. It's only a matter o' time until they're caught."

"Ain't you goin' to look for the *Puddle Duck* first?" I asks.

"It would be useless. She's at the bottom of the river by now."

My black box with the paints in it, and my shirt! My yeller shirt and horseshoes! It warn't so bad for Al and Hoss. Most of Al's duds were in the room at the hotel; Hoss didn' have any. I starts a snivelin'; Al pats my shoulder.

"As soon as the store opens," says Hoss, "I aims to get me—" and away he goes about eatin' again.

"That's so. You boys haven't had anything to eat."

"No sir," says Hoss and me together.

It were now full day.

"Here"—and Al handed Hoss a handful of matches. "Go up creek a way and find a likely-looking spot for a fire. I'm going to kick the storekeeper out."

Hoss and me had a good bed of coals when Al came up the path. He were carryin' a tin coffee pot, a fryin' pan, sliced bacon, and a hat full of eggs. There were a loaf of bread under his arm. He sent me back for a can of milk and knives and forks, what he'd forgot.

We had a bully breakfast. I told Al 'bout the telephone message from Mark. He cussed and 'lowed Mark were a mighty poor detector.

Hidin' the cookin' utensils we went back to the store. We found the storekeeper a-twitter with excitement.

"The sheriff wants you to call him right away," he shouts as we stepped onto the porch.

Although Al were dead for sleep, an' his face gray, he looked a new man after talkin' over the 'phone.

"Catch Hoss," he hollered as he leaped for the motor boat. "Bring him back."

I galloped up the path a yellin' for Hoss. Caught him at camp with part of a loaf of bread under his arm.

"Al wants you right away," I said, wheelin' 'round and racin' for the landin'.

Hoss come slappin' behind me, a wavin' the bread. "Is the klucksters here again?" he yelled at ever' jump.

Al were in the motorboat, the motor goin'. "Jump in," he orders.

Hoss made twenty feet in one leap. I pushed her nose clear. Al backed her into the river and headed up stream as fast as he could drive. When lined out, Al told me 'bout the message.

The sheriff and a posse were leavin' Brookfield right away on a chartered packet and would pick us up at the shell camp. Had no time to talk, but important news for us.

Reachin' camp, Al run aboard the store boat and bought an extra box of cartridges for his six-shooter.

Hoss and me watched for the steamer. Seemed no time a'tall 'til she sailed from behind a towhead with a cloud of black smoke pourin' out of her stacks. I could hear her paddle-wheels beatin' the water when she were a mile away.

CHAPTER XXI

CABIN IN THE WOODS

"HERE she come," yelled Hoss, a-jumpin' up and down and wavin' his ragged hat. That pilot were a drivin' her. As she drew near, I could see the sheriff's head stuck out the wheel house winder a lookin' for us. The lower deck were cluttered with horses and men. At a tap of her big bell, she wheeled down stream to turn for a landin', and come a-slidin' in as proud as could be, the mate lowerin' the plank.

"Hustle aboard, you birds," shouted the sheriff, drawin' in his head.

She were the *Rosalie*.

Boat didn' seem to stop a-tall. Just scooped us all up. The sheriff j'ined me and Al on the cabin deck.

"Pull up a chair and I'll spill the story. Swanson is in the can, good and plenty.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The grand jury indicted him. I've a warrant for Biglow in my pocket right now. He's wanted for bribery and embezzlement of state funds.

"From the little I gathered over the phone while talkin' to the chief in Burlington, the whole gang air due for a long stretch. Seems Biglow has been in a jam for quite a spell, somebody blackmailin' him. When the investigation got under way it proved he were broke, flatter'n a flounder. Also they wanted him to explain the mysterious disappearance of a partner."

Al and I just set there, drinkin' it all in.

"We picked up Bud," went on the sheriff, "and brought a little gentle pressure to bear. In fact, we drug him out of a cell at two in the mornin' and sorter massaged him with a rubber hose loaded with shot.

"He didn' know much, but told us the red-headed gang-boss has a two-story log house down river 'bout fifty miles.

"Afore the shell beds there were exhausted, he run it as a boardin' house, but for the past year, or so there's been a right respectable old couple livin' in it. Bud 'lowed it were Red's folks, although they go by another name.

"I've had a deputy there since yesterday. He phoned he'd been watchin' the house but found out nothin' other than the old gentleman went to the pump for water or fed the hogs.

"The doors and winders of the lower floor air wide open, but the upper winders air closed and the blinds down. A neighbor thinks the old folks use the lower part only, but, actin' on a hunch, I'm goin' to raid it. If we find it's a dud, we'll comb the back country. That's what I brought horses for."

"Did any of your deputies see anything of the *Puddle Duck?* It's gone, too," says Al.

"So they got away with the house boat, too!" The Sheriff got up to spit over the side of the boat.

WHILE we were a-talkin', the river were a-swarmin' toward us. Close in shore the trees raced past nigh as fast as when I rid in the automobile. Furnace doors were a slammin' and I could hear niggers bailin' coal. We were interrupted by the captain.

"We'll be there in a couple of hours. I know the landin' well. If you'll take a suggestion from a plain river man, I'd hide those hosses on the boiler deck. They won't be quite as conspicuous. Bring your deputies up into the Texas. If anyone is watchin', they'll think we're makin' a regular landin'."

"You said a mouthful." The sheriff moved to the railin'. "Hey, Jack,"—he had to yell to make himself heard over the exhaust— "put them hosses on the b'iler deck and take the saddles off. Make 'em look like a shipment of stock. Then you and your gang come up into the big cabin and keep out of sight. Remember there air telephones in this country."

"That's a heap more sensible," the captain says as he started for the stairway leadin' to the wheel house.

"My deputy will be at the landin'," the sheriff went on, "and we'll find out how the land lies afore startin' anythin'. May be better to hide the posse in the woods 'til night and just leave one man at the landin'. First, we'll see what the deputy has to report."

The whistle over our head roared a passin' signal to the *City of Alton* which were comin' up river. Her upper deck were jammed with wimmen a-wavin' handkerchiefs. A band were a playin'. Al never glanced up. His mind were plumb centered on Bellvee.

"What were you saying about the *Puddle Duck?"* Al questioned when the sheriff set down again.

"Burlington requested me to locate it and hold her 'til their detectives arrived. 'Magine there air somethin' aboard that scow they want."

"There sure is," replied Al. "Biglow's gang raided us twice."

So Al ups and tells the sheriff 'bout the fight we all had on the river and 'bout me cuttin' down on Red.

"Good work, Joe," says the sheriff, pat-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tin' me on the knee. "Hope you salted him for keeps. He's been a nuisance for years. Had him up twice, but he won an acquittal each time. We know he's graftin', sellin' liquor, and runnin' wimmen, but we never got the goods on him. If he's alive I'll bring him to trial on a charge of assault with attempt to kill. That's for takin' a pot shot at you folks on the *Puddle Duck.*"

"Tell me," and Al leaned forward, "has any of your men heard anything about Miss Patterson? Did Bud mention her?"

"I want to talk to you 'bout that," says the sheriff in a very stern tone. "Seems this girl is Biglow's lawful wedded wife. She run off with you, but he got a right to recover her. A young feller like you ought to know better than to mix up with another man's wife. If we didn' have these other counts against Biglow, we certainly wouldn't interfere between man and wife."

"NOW let me tell you something," says Al, very angry. So he ups and informs the sheriff what he told me back in the hotel—all 'bout Biglow learnin' that Bellvee's father had died and left her and her brother a quarter of a million, how he just naturally read a marriage ceremony over her with some of his bums as witnesses and with a crooked minister, locked her in a room and took away her clothes.

"If he were broke," Al finishes up, "you see what it meant to him to get hold of Bellvee's money and her brother's. That marriage is going to be annulled, but we have to get her back so she can tell her story to the judge."

"Why didn' you tell me this before?" asked the sheriff, much indignant. "Why he can whisk her into another state—"

"If I told you before Biglow became a fugitive from justice you wouldn't have helped me a bit," Al comes back.

"That's right. I wouldn't," admits the sheriff. "Shake, young feller."

We landed the packet a little after twelve. As we tied up at an abandoned woodyard, a husky in a flannel shirt with a floppy black hat drug a handcuffed nigger from behind a bush.

"Hustle aboard, Alec," called the sheriff to the husky. "Bring your souvenir."

The nigger were ragged and hatless. He were naturally coffee-colored, but now he were plumb ashen from fright. There were dried blood at the corner of his flat nose. He's been mistreated, it looked like.

"Folks, this is my deputy, Ramblin' Alec," said the sheriff as soon as the two stepped on to the upper deck. "Now out with it and make it short."

Rollin' a cud from one side to the other, Alec lit into talkin': "I were a-layin' back of that house this mornin', 'round two, a-cussin' to myself and slappin' skeeters—didn' dare even to smoke—when this nigger comes a-creepin' through the brush totin' a grain sack of somethin'.

"I 'lowed I'd see what he were up to. Arrivin' at the back fence he sets down the sack and pulls a cowhorn out from under his shirt. Toots on it like he were coon huntin'.

"A light showed in the upper winder, then the shade were yanked down again. This here boy set the sack over the fence, climbed after it, and lugs it into the house. I couldn' see what were in it, but it were sizeable.

"Says I to myself, 'What's a nigger totin' in there this time of night?'

"While I were a-thinkin' over the sad life of a deputy, I heard a rumpus in the back yard. It were darker'n a stack of black cats on account of some pecan trees. A cow snorted and scrambled to her feet.

"This here nigger fell over her in the dark. The next thing I knew he piled over the fence right smack into my arms.

"So, I just naturally sapped him over the head for the good of the order, drug him into the bushes, handcuffed him, and waited results.

"Pretty soon he began to flop and moan, set up, and lit into prayin'. I snatched him to his feet and waltzed him away from the house out of hearin' and set out to find what it were all about."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"For the love of Pete," bellowed the sheriff, "spit it out and quit ramblin'. What were in the sack and what about it?"

"WELL, ain't I tellin' you?" Alec pulled a bag of Bull Durham out of his pocket and rolled a cigarette. "This nigger air a boat-hand of Red's. The sack were full of grub, enough to feed the old couple a month.

"All the nigger knew were he'd been told to come to the house nights around twelve and get a list left on the kitchen table. Then he were to go to the company store, wake up the clerk, get the groceries and deliver 'em the next night.

"The old man livin' there told him not to enter without tootin' his horn first and to wait for a light in the upper winder afore he come in. No light, no deliver; tote the grub back."

"They're in that house as sure as shootin'," says the sheriff.

"Yeah, and that ain't all," Alec spoke up. "There's a doc callin' ever' day. Neighbors 'lowed the old woman might be ailin'. No one has seen her for a right smart time."

"It's Red, I'll bet, or the feller Hoss beaned with a rock. Maybe you didn' kill Red after all, Joe. Takes more than a handful of shot to make an impression on a bird as tough as him."

"Let's get started," says Al, a-pacin' back and forth. "We are enough to surround the place and raid it. I want Bellvee out of that gang's hands at once."

"Just a minute," says the sheriff. "They've got the girl. You want her alive, don't you? Supposin' we start somethin' and supposin' they threaten to bump her off if we don't let 'em make a get-away? What air you going' to do 'bout that?"

Al studied over it a mite. "Let 'em go," says he.

"We'll scout the place first," went on the sheriff. "Accordin' to the description Bud give, which Alec here has verified, the house air near surrounded by timber.

"We can give it the once-over without bein' seen. There's a chance the girl ain't there. They may have her hid out in the bottoms.

"Biglow has a pretty fast boat, but I hardly think he has been able to make a sneak, 'cause the authorities have been watchin' depots all over these parts.

"Men air posted at boat landin's, captains of packets have been warned. If Biglow's in the house it's a safe bet she is too.

"Here's what we'll do: I'm goin' to send six mounted deputies into the woods, two of 'em will circle west through the woods to a road that passes in front of the house. They'll let anyone leavin' get out of sight and then pick 'em up. I'll have a couple more cover the back from the timber, and two the road east. Joe," the sheriff's eyes twinkled, "you take Hoss and work down along the bank. There air a bare chance you may find your scow or their motorboat, but I doubt it."

Later I found out he just wanted Hoss and me out of the way. "I'm goin' to try and get somethin' more out of this coon," he went on, turnin' to the prisoner.

"When did you see your red-headed boss last?"

"Mister officer, the last time I done seen him he were at the shell camp. Please won't you all take these things off'n my hands? I ain't aimin' to start no fuss."

The sheriff nodded to Alec. As Alec stepped toward the prisoner, the coon shivered. I bet Alec had treated him rough last night.

"Who told you to call at that house nights?"

"It were another nigger what done brought me a written message from my boss."

"Do you know him?"

"Sure, he's Iodine."

"Who?"

"Folks all calls him Iodine; he's sorter a reddish yeller."

"Where's he now?"

"Up yonder at the shell camp, or was the last time I seen 'im."

"Where do you spend your time when not deliverin' groceries?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Me and my old woman has a shack an' a patch of garden truck near the store."

"Where's this store?"

"Down stream a-ways at the ferry landin'. 'At's the road you all air talkin' 'bout as passin' the boss's house. It goes ramblin' back to the county seat and the east end 'cross the river at the store."

"I know the place," spoke up the captain. "It's a hang-out for river thieves. For a time got so a steamboat wouldn't dare drap off freight unless the owner were at the landin' with a shotgun."

"Al, you air a-yearnin' for somethin' active to do. Suppose you and a deputy—" the sheriff broke off—"can you ride a hoss?"

"Sure," says Al.

"Well, you and Alec here ride inland a ways. Then cut the road and go to the ferry. See what you can find out there. Cook up a story but don't you dare start anythin'."

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK

Judgment Deferred

THE end of the world did not occur on April 23, 1832—as scheduled. And for this reason, a good many apprehensive New Yorkers found themselves in possession of a supply of white muslin for which they had no earthly use.

No earthly use: the phrase is employed advisedly. For a certain man named Miller chose the early spring of 1832 to warn his fellows that the conclusion of all mortal matters was at hand. He thoughtfully set the date—April 23—though he seems to have considered mention of the exact hour unnecessary.

There was, of course, tremendous activity in preparation—taking forms which varied with the assurance and business acumen of the individual. Some merchants gave their stocks away, believing forlornly that they would have no more profit from mundane goods. But there were also some pretty shrewd opportunists—as the W.P.A. research workers have taken occasion delightedly to point out.

For surely one of the most alert merchandisers in nineteenth-century New York was the owner of a Bowery dry-goods store who gathered in repentant sinners with a special sale on white muslin for ascension robes. Did a rushing business, too. Thus girded for that hour when fire would rain from the sky, frightened citizens gathered in churches and halls and waited anxiously for the crack of doom.

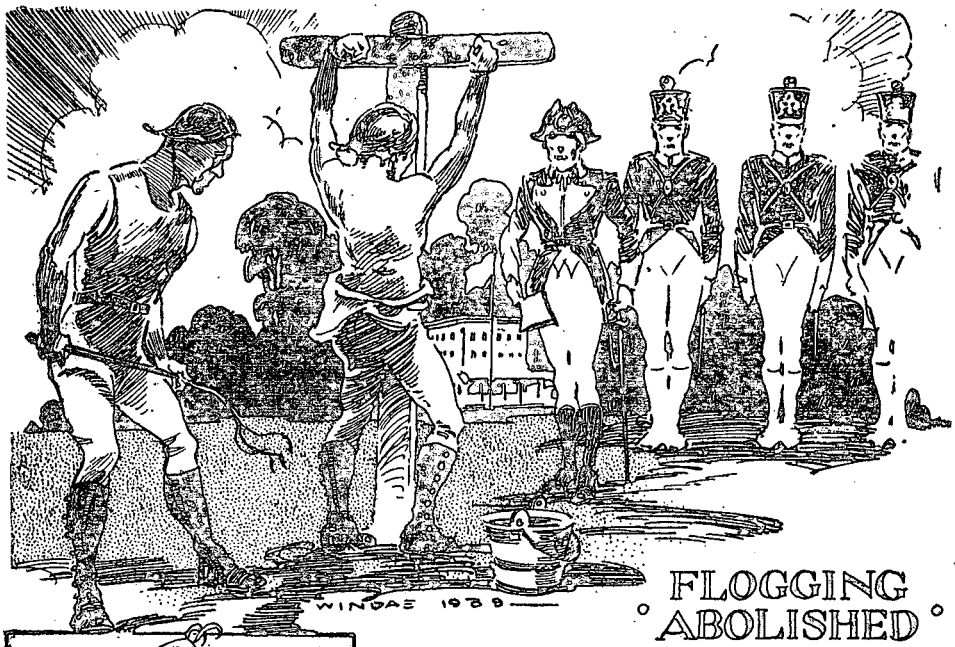
But it seems to be a matter of record that the hour did not come. Miller tried to set the date ahead, but found no more takers.

—Dr. Charles Ticknor Tolson

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LEGENDS OF THE LEGIONARIES

ORIGINS OF THE CUSTOMS AND SAYINGS OF THE FIGHTING-MEN : BY W·A·WINDAS

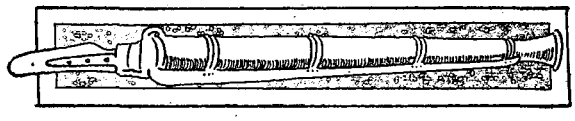


◦ FLOGGING ◦ ABOLISHED ◦

Flogging, as a method of maintaining army discipline, was first abolished in the cavalry of Louis XIII of France. His cavalry was formed of "nearly all gentlemen," and would not submit to this degrading punishment.

◦ BAGPIPES ◦

The bagpipes of Scottish bands are a relic of the musical instruments of the Roman legions who, in turn, copied them from the Persians.



◦ HAND GUNS ◦

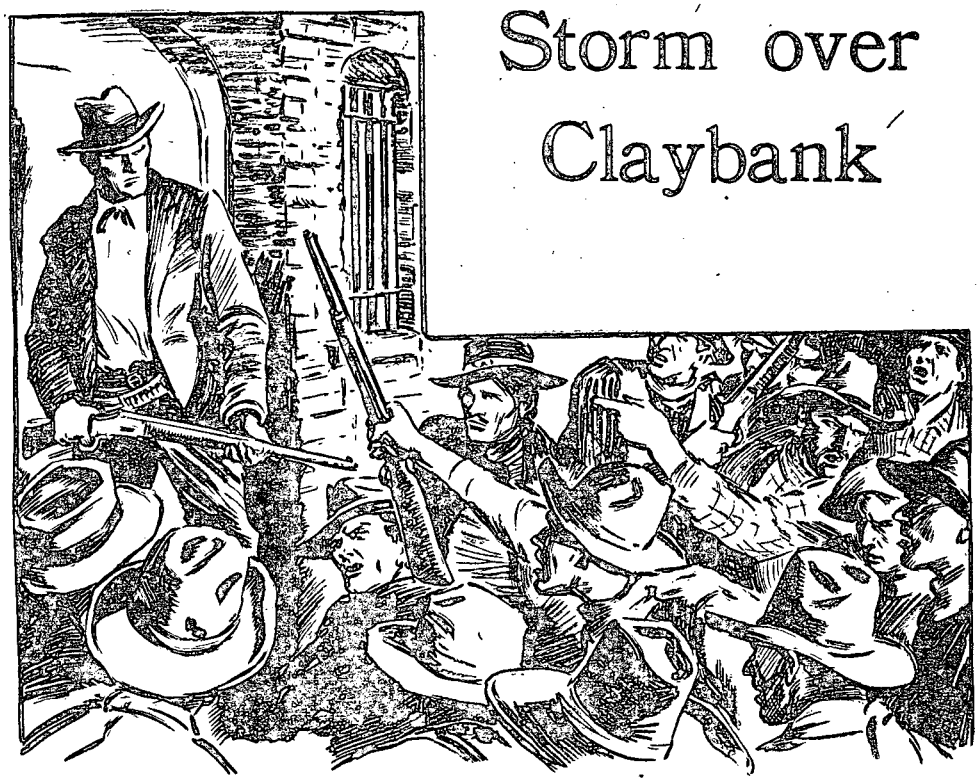
Hand guns, or hand cannon, were introduced into England in 1471, by King Edward IV. The guns were the first type of firearm that could be used by the individual soldier.

◦ FIRST CAVALRY ◦

Although Egyptians used horses in warfare (to pull chariots) the first to have regular cavalry were the ancient Assyrians, who found mounted troops superior to war-carts.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Storm over Claybank



Melody lowered his rifle, swung it from side to side. "Wait," he shouted

This time it's justice, not mercy, that falls like rain from heaven. Only it doesn't fall very gently

By PHILIP KETCHUM

Author of "The Valiant Arm," "Tribute to None," etc.

WHERE the Modoc trail came to the edge of the mesa, Ross Melody stopped his horse, and for several minutes he sat there staring out over the valley below. There was no sign of any breeze, no cloud in the sky. A mid-August sun beat down on the land with a scorching heat which sucked the moisture from the grass and turned it crisp and brown. The earth was laced with a pattern of narrow cracks in the dry, hard soil.

Five years before, Melody reflected, this had been a pleasant country, dotted here and there with browsing herds of cattle. During the dry months, for there had always been dry months, towering windmills had pulled water up from the streams hidden below the ground, and had kept the round, iron tanks near the windmills filled to the brim. But those hidden streams had run dry and the windmills no longer served any purpose. Five years of drought had emptied the range of cattle. Some had been shipped to Texas, some had been driven to government grazing lands deep in the Washata Mountains, faintly visible on the western horizon.

Ross Melody fashioned a cigarette and propped it between his thin, tight lips. He was a tall man, still young, but he had the same dried-out appearance as the country. The tanned skin of his face stretched tightly across cheek bone and jaw, sharpening his features and giving him a gaunt, weary expression. A layer of dust

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had settled over him, deepening the shadow of a day's growth of whiskers. Thin, red lines webbed his eyes.

A dozen miles across the flat, unbroken country below, Melody could distinguish the town of Claybank; a place of low adobe buildings, now mostly deserted. Roads stretched out from that town like the crooked spokes of a wheel, pointing the way to the surrounding ranches where people still lived, clinging desperately to a belief that the drouth could not last.

One of those roads led to Melody's ranch, and on it Melody could make out a dim speck which must have been a rider heading for Claybank. Here and there he could see other riders and he suddenly remembered that this was Saturday and that men from the ranches still came to town on Saturday night, even though most of them had no money to spend, no reason to come.

Melody rode on. He came to Claybank while the sun was still an hour high in the western sky, and turning down its broad main street he headed for the sheriff's house. There were several men sprawled out in the shade made by the Silver Dollar saloon and another group was on the porch of the general store. Melody raised his hand in greeting.

On the hotel porch he caught sight of Gail Winstead and her older brother, Alvin. He swung his horse that way, dismounted and climbed the porch.

Gail saw him coming and got to her feet. She was a tall, slender, clear-eyed girl with a mass of dark hair tucked under the crown of her Stetson hat. In spite of the heat, she looked cool. She was smiling as Melody came up to her and the grip of her hand was tight and friendly.

"Didn't know you'd be riding in, Gail," Melody said quietly. "Glad you came."

Gail shrugged. "There's not much to do at the ranch. We all came. Bert and Sam are somewhere around."

Bert was the girl's other brother. Sam was her father. He was one of the earliest settlers in the valley, owned one of the largest places.

ALVIN moved around to face them. He looked down to where Melody was still holding Gail's hand, looked up and said, grinning, "When are you two going to get married—or are you?"

Gail flushed, bit her lips. She pulled her hand away from Melody's clasp. Melody said. "Run along, Alvin. You talk too much."

Alvin laughed. He was tall and heavy and a twinkle of good humor was in his eyes. He slapped Melody on the shoulder and moved away.

"I've got to see Joe Barlow," Melody said to Gail after her brother had gone. "Then I'll be back. We—we might eat together."

Gail nodded. "How is Joe?"

"His foot's still bad. He can't walk yet."

"I'll be here, Ross," Gail promised.

Melody's eyes rested on the girl and the question Alvin had asked flashed across his mind. He and Gail would have been married long ago, he decided, if it hadn't been for the protracted drouth. It hit the small ranchers worse than the big fellows. Most of the small ranchers were in the fix he was in. They had had nothing to fall back on. Another year like this and they would be wiped out.

Melody said: "I'll not be long, Gail." And then he turned and went back to his horse.

Sam Winstead suddenly appeared in the door of the stage office across the street, and hailing him, called, "How do you like sheriffin', Ross?"

"I don't like it," Melody answered.

Sam Winstead roared with laughter, as if the question and answer had been weighted with humor. He was a big-framed man, not tall but broad of shoulder and almost fat. His eyes and hair were dark and there were stubborn lines in the set of his jaw. It was Sam Winstead more than any other man who had strengthened the courage of those who still lived here.

Ross Melody went on to Joe Barlow's house, which stood almost at the end of the main street. There were only two other

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

buildings beyond it, the Four Ace Saloon and the jail. Melody tied his horse to a post near the house, walked up to the door, knocked, and at Barlow's invitation opened the door and stepped inside.

The sheriff leaned back in a rocker, one bandaged leg propped up on a box. He squinted at Melody, scratched his thin, whiskered face, then asked abruptly, "Well, did you get 'em?"

Melody shook his head. "I followed them past Modoc. I think they've left the country." He was referring to a couple of strangers who had fled after shooting up the town the week before.

Joe Barlow shrugged. "Jist as well, long as they're gone. Won't need you much longer, Ross. I'll be up an' around in another week."

Melody made a cigarette. He hoped that Barlow was right for he had no liking for this job. In a way it had come in handy, however, for what he had earned by acting in the crippled sheriff's place had met the interest on his note at the bank.

"Chris Hoffman's in town tonight," Barlow said slowly. "I saw him through the window. He's pretty well tanked up. I'd watch him, Ross. Men are short tempered in times like these."

Melody shrugged. Hoffman he remembered as a dour-faced, middle-aged man from across the Spanish sink, twenty miles south. He didn't often come to Claybank. When he did there was usually trouble. He was crude and offensive. It never took him very long to find someone who resented the way he talked or acted.

"I'll watch him," Melody promised.

He stepped outside. The sun was a ball of fire in the west. The air was still hot. There was still no breeze. Over near the Four Ace saloon he saw Bert Winstead, Sam's youngest son, talking to Chris Hoffman. He watched them for a moment, then walked that way and coming up to them said to Hoffman, "I'll take that gun of yours, Chris. You won't need it in Claybank."

Hoffman's face darkened. "To hell with you, Melody."

"I'll take the gun," Melody said again, his voice very quiet.

Hoffman moistened his thick lips, laughed suddenly and took out his gun. He handed it to Melody with an elaborate bow.

Bert Winstead grinned. "Sorry I don't have one, too."

MELODY said nothing. He tucked the extra gun in his belt and moved toward the door of the saloon. Three men just coming out stopped him to ask him about his chase. Two of them were ranchers from north of town. The third man, Bill Grover, owned the Four Ace saloon. He was thin, hollow-chested; and he had a racking cough that never let up for very long. Melody talked to the three men for a while, then changing his mind about entering the saloon, accompanied them up the street.

At the hotel he left them and joined Gail who still waited on the porch.

"Let's not eat for a while, Ross," Gail suggested.

Melody shrugged, dropped into a chair. Through two of the buildings across the street he could see the prairie and the dying sun seemed to have set it on fire. He stared at it soberly.

"What are you thinking of?" the girl asked.

"I'm thinking," said Melody slowly, "that if it hadn't been for the long dry years we've had, I might have owned a thousand head, might have been able to build onto my cabin, might have even had a wife."

Gail stirred suddenly in her chair. "You might still have a wife, Ross."

Ross Melody swung around to look at her and he knew that it wasn't the reflected light of the sun which had colored her cheeks.

"Well?" she asked defiantly.

"You really mean that, don't you, Gail?" Melody said slowly. "You really mean it, even though you know how impossible it is."

"Why impossible?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Have you ever tried living on potatoes three times a day? That's what it would be after a while—and we'd be lucky if we had that."

Gail leaned forward. "But we could do it, Ross. And the rains will come. This country isn't turning into a desert. Next year—"

Next year. That was it. That was what all of them were living for. Next year, after heavy winter snows, the grass would come up green and spring and summer rains would keep it green. But for five years, now, they had been saying, "Next year—"

Ross Melody bit his lips. He hadn't meant anything like this ever to happen until he was sure of the future. But now that it had happened he was suddenly glad. He reached for Gail's hand and said, "Gail, if you really want it—"

THE shot which interrupted him was not loud but was still clear and distinct. It seemed to come from down the street, from the direction of the Four Ace Saloon. Melody released the girl's hand. He stood up, muttered some apology and then started for the Four Ace Saloon.

There were about a dozen men in the saloon when Melody got there. Most of them were crowded around the door to a back room where Grover sometimes ran private games. They were a curiously silent crowd. Melody elbowed his way through them, stopped just inside the door.

Only two men were in the room. Over in one corner, leaning against the wall, was Chris Hoffman. His face was flushed and his eyes were blurred by drink. In his hand dangled a gun.

The other man lay on his face on the floor, the back of his shirt stained with blood. Even before he rolled that man over Melody knew that it was Bert Winstead who had been shot.

Another man pushed through the crowd and knelt at Bert's side, a man Melody recognized as Doc Carmichael. The doctor made a swift examination, looked up at Melody. "Can't move him," he said. "Have to do what I can right here." His voice didn't sound very hopeful.

Melody got to his feet. He looked over at the door. The men standing there seemed stunned at what had happened. Bill Grover, the owner of the place, was biting at his lower lip, scowling at Hoffman. Others in that doorway were looking at Hoffman and Melody didn't like the expressions on their faces. He swung around, crossed over to where Hoffman was standing, and took the gun from the man's hand. Hoffman didn't make any objection. A voice from the doorway said harshly, "Give him back that gun, Melody, an' get out of the way."

Ross Melody made no answer. He didn't even look toward the man who had spoken. There was another door to the room, a door which led outside. Melody opened that door, grasped Hoffman by the arm and led him through it, kicked the door shut and started Hoffman toward the jail. Hoffman was so drunk that he could hardly keep his balance.

The jail, like all the other buildings in Claybank, was an old structure but its adobe walls were thick and the bars at the windows were strong and well placed. The sheriff's office was in a front room. Melody took Hoffman across that room and unlocked a heavy door and led him back to one of the two cells. When he released Hoffman's arm the man staggered across to the wall, leaned against it for a moment and then slid to the floor.

"What happened, Hoffman?"

The noises which came from the man's throat in answer were unintelligible. In the dim light his eyes looked glassy.

"Where did you get the gun?" Melody asked.

Hoffman's mouth dropped open and he rolled over on his back, completely out.

Ross Melody locked the cell door. He locked the jail door. In the sheriff's office he examined the gun he had just taken from Hoffman. Whose gun it was he didn't know. There was one exploded shell in the gun's chamber and the smell of freshly burned powder came from the barrel.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

That gun and the first gun Melody had taken from the man, he locked up in one of the drawers of the sheriff's desk. The sun had gone down and already the shadows of the coming night were beginning to stretch out across the land. Melody stepped over to the door.

There was a crowd of men in front of the Four Ace Saloon, a silent, waiting crowd. Melody left the sheriff's office, locking the door behind him. He moved over to the Four Ace Saloon, pushed his way inside. Lighted lanterns swayed from the ceiling. The place was crowded, but it was a quiet crowd. Grover and two bartenders were back of the bar. They were setting up drinks and didn't seem to be charging for them. Nearly everyone was looking toward the closed door of the back room.

Ross Melody turned toward the bar and called Grover's name. The gambler came up to him, offered Melody a drink. Melody shook his head. "How did it happen, Bill?" he asked quietly.

Grover shrugged. "I don't know. Wasn't no one in that room but young Winstead an' Hoffman. They had gone in there to have a little talk. At least, that's what they told me."

"Where did Hoffman get the gun?"

"He got it from me, but I didn't know—"

"How did he happen to get it from you?"

"Last time he was in here, a month ago I guess, he left one of his guns with me for a ten-dollar loan. Just before he and Bert went into that room he paid off the loan an' I gave him the gun."

Melody nodded. "How's young Winstead?"

"I don't know. Doc Carmichael's with him. His folks are in there, too."

"Gail?"

"Yeah."

THE door to the back room opened quietly and Sam Winstead came out. He closed the door after him and stood for a moment against it, his eyes sweeping the room. Here and there, men who had been talking in whispers fell silent. Winstead's glance fell suddenly on Ross Melody and he started across the room toward him.

Melody straightened as the older man came up and when Winstead neared him he asked quietly, "How is he, Sam? Does the doc think—"

Sam Winstead halted a pace away. There was a bleak, cold look in his eyes and the lines of his face were stubbornly tightened. He didn't act as if he had heard Melody's question but in a sharp, rasping voice, he demanded, "What have you done with the man who murdered my boy?"

"Hoffman's in jail," Melody answered.

Winstead held out his hand. "Give me the keys."

A cold chill ran down Melody's back and he was aware of a sudden thickness in his throat beyond which no words could pass. He shook his head and his lips formed the word, "No."

Winstead blinked at him. There was no sign in the man's eyes or face that he recognized Melody. He kept his hand held out and he said again, his voice heavy with anger, "Give me those keys."

Melody was silent and he was aware of the deep silence in the room. Beyond Sam Winstead's shoulder he could see the door to that back room open again. This time it was Alvin Winstead who came out. Alvin's face was pale and drawn. He came forward several steps, halted abruptly.

"Where's Hoffman?" he asked in a thin, dry voice. "Where's Hoffman?"

"In the jail," someone answered.

Alvin didn't seem to see either his father or Ross Melody. He didn't seem to be looking at anyone in particular, and when he spoke it was almost as if he were talking to himself.

"Bert's dead," he said huskily. "He didn't have a chance. He wasn't armed and the shot that got him got him in the back. I want Hoffman."

A new tension which hadn't been in the room before came over it then. Melody

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

could sense it in a stiffening of the attitudes of those who were standing near to him. He heard some man breathe softly, "Through the back, huh? Through the back. The dirty murderer!" And then there was a sudden, restless shifting of the crowd, and here and there men's hands dropped to their guns.

"The keys," said Winstead again.

Melody's eyes darkened. "Hoffman's dead drunk," he said flatly. "When I took him to the jail he passed out completely. If I—"

"The keys," Winstead interrupted.

Melody turned away, walked over to the door. There he stopped, swung around and looked back over the room. All the men were watching him, now. Some of them seemed puzzled, as if they couldn't understand why he had refused to give up the jail keys.

"Chris Hoffman's in jail," he said slowly. "He stays in jail. Murderer or not, he's entitled to a fair trial."

There was an angry denial of that statement but Ross Melody didn't wait to hear it. He pushed on outside and walked over to the jail.

The sheriff's office was open and when he went inside he found Joe Barlow seated at the desk. There was a crutch leaning against the wall, Barlow hadn't lighted the lamp.

"Bert's dead," Melody said as he came in.

Barlow must have heard the story from someone else for he only nodded. Then after a pause, he asked, "Did Hoffman do it?"

"He had a gun in his hand and was in the room. The gun had been fired."

"How did Sam Winstead take it?"

"He wanted the jail keys."

Joe Barlow scratched his chin. "Some fellow just rode in an' said those fellows you just got back from chasin' swung over to the Sawtelle country. Guess maybe you better start after 'em, Ross. I'd like to have you bring 'em in."

"I'll start tomorrow."

"No. Start now."

Ross Melody smiled. He said, "Thanks, Joe. But I reckon I'll stay here. I just put a man in jail. I mean to see that he stays there."

Barlow made no immediate answer and in the thick dusk, Melody couldn't see his face. He moved over to the door. A group of men were going up the street. He watched them turn into the general store, saw them come out after a moment. One of the men held a coil of rope. Melody's lips tightened. He walked over to a corner of the room and got his rifle, examined it.

"Hoffman isn't worth it, Ross," Barlow said slowly. "He has been headed for something like this all his life. When he gets drunk he goes crazy mad. He won't be much of a loss."

Melody shrugged. "I'm not thinkin' so much of Hoffman. I'm thinking of Sam Winstead, and Alvin. I'm thinking of those other men. A lynching is a murder, Joe. It would cloud their lives forever."

"You can't stop it, Ross."

"I've got to stop it."

"You'll jist get yourself killed."

"Maybe not."

THE group with the rope had reached the Four Ace Saloon. For a moment they disappeared inside, then after a short interval men started coming out of the saloon, began milling around the front door. More men came down from town and joined them. There was still light enough for Melody to see the men quite clearly. He saw Winstead come out, followed by Alvin; saw Winstead and his son start toward the jail and saw the others move with them.

"They're coming," he said to Joe Barlow.

"Help me move this chair over to the door." Barlow ordered. "Maybe they'll listen to me."

"I said this was my job."

"Who's sheriff, you or me?"

Melody said nothing but he didn't help Barlow to the door. Instead, he moved there himself, cradling his rifle in his arms. The men came on, led by Sam and Alvin. There wasn't any shouting. There wasn't any noise at all. The dust they kicked up

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clung low to the ground for there was no wind to blow it away.

"That's far enough, Winstead," Melody said suddenly. "What do you want here?"

Winstead stopped and those who had come with him crowded up close behind him and spread out on each side. Alvin was at his father's shoulder and in the crowd Melody could make out many another man whom he knew. Though unable to see them all clearly he could still measure the attitude of the mob by those faces which were near enough to be plainly seen.

He could understand how they felt, too. Bert Winstead had been popular with everyone. He had been shot in the back by a man who wasn't liked. A rugged, frontier justice demanded that man's life, law or no law. He would be given a trial but the trial would be a mockery for Hoffman was dead drunk. And later, many of these same men would remember that and would not be proud of their part in it.

"I want Hoffman," Winstead said stubbornly. "Put a gun in his hand and send him out here."

"He's dead drunk, Sam."

"Then, by God, I'll treat him like he treated my son."

"You mean you'll murder him?"

Winstead had taken a step forward but at that sharp question of Melody's he hesitated.

"To hell with you, Melody!" shouted a voice from the back of the mob. "We want Hoffman!"

"Yeah. We want Hoffman!"

More of the men took up the cry and with a sudden movement the whole group started forward.

Ross Melody stepped away from the door, lowered his rifle, swept it from side to side. "Wait!" he shouted. "Wait a minute! All of you!"

Melody drew a deep breath and his eyes, jerking from side to side, fell on Bill Grover. The gambler had a gun in one hand and his thin, pale face was set in tight, expressionless lines. Melody looked past the man and out over the crowd. He said sharply, "You men know only two things. You know that Bert Winstead was shot. You know that Chris Hoffman was in that room with him and that Chris had a gun in his hand. You've put those things together and have decided that Hoffman killed Bert Winstead. How do you know you're right?"

"Who else could have done it, Melody?" cried a voice.

"There was a back door to that room!" Melody shouted. "Hoffman was dead drunk. Suppose someone else came into that back room, shot Bert Winstead, put the gun in Hoffman's hand and left."

For an instant that held the men silent, but only for an instant. "Bluff, Melody!" someone yelled.

Again, then, the mob edged forward, but Melody didn't back away. "You call it bluff," he shouted. "All right, then. What do you think of this? When I was in that room I noticed a boot-track in the blood on the floor. It wasn't Hoffman's boot-track. I know that. Yet it was there, right beside young Winstead's body." Melody paused, moistened his lips. He stared over at Bill Grover, then shouted suddenly. "Grover, was it yours? Let me see the sole of your boot!"

GROVER'S mouth dropped open and his eyes widened. Melody lowered his rifle. He leaned it back against the adobe wall of the jail. And not taking his eyes from Grover, he started toward the man, saying again, "Grover, let me see the sole of your boot. I know you gave Hoffman the gun. But when did you give it to him? Before or after Winstead was shot?"

An angry flush of color showed in Grover's face. He yelled, "Damn you, Melody. You know—"

Ross Melody's fist smashed into the man's mouth, killing the rest of what he might have said. And as Grover staggered back, Melody followed after the man and hit him twice more. Hard, vicious blows were those. They sent the man crashing to the ground, unconscious.

The crowd had shifted around a little, forming almost a circle around Melody and the man he had knocked out. Melody

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bent over. He picked Grover up, got the man's body over his shoulder and started back toward the jail.

A couple of men who were in the way he elbowed aside; and reaching the door, he dumped Grover inside, much as he might have dropped a sack of flour. His rifle was still leaning against the outside wall. He reached out for it and turned back to face the mob.

"I've got two men in here, now," he said bluntly. "They're both under arrest, though there ain't much doubt in my mind as to who's guilty. But just the same, they're both staying here."

Sam Winstead and Alvin both seemed a little stunned at what had happened. Others in the crowd were looking at each other with puzzled expressions. Melody stepped back through the door but he still watched the men outside. Sam Winstead's shoulders suddenly sagged and the man turned away. Alvin followed him; and almost at the same time all the others started slowly up the street.

Ross Melody leaned back against the wall. His body was wet with perspiration and his knees felt weak. He heard Joe Barlow scratching a match.

"Mighty quick work, Melody," said the crippled sheriff. "I guess maybe you ought to have had this job of mine in the first place. I thought all along that there wasn't any question but that Hoffman done it."

"He did," said Melody.

"Huh?"

"Look at those boots of Grover's. You won't find any blood on 'em."

"But I thought you said there was a boot-track in the room?"

"There was. I made it."

Joe Barlow whistled.

"So long as there's any question as to who killed Bert Winstead we won't have any trouble with a mob," Melody said slowly. "Tomorrow, when the shock of the killing has worn off, we won't have to worry. I can apologize to Grover, then, an' let him go. You know the people of this country, Joe. If hard times hadn't put their nerves on edge they would never have acted like they did tonight. When they've had time to think it over, they'll be glad they didn't go back to the days of Judge Lynch."

"Grover won't like it any too well."

Melody shrugged. "He helped out as much as I did. Maybe he won't like it. He wouldn't have liked it if the lynching had gone through, either, for every man implicated would have faced a murder charge. You know the kind of state's attorney we've got."

Melody lifted Grover up, carried him back and locked him in the other cell. He went out to the sheriff's office. Joe Barlow, with the aid of his crutch, was standing in the door. He said suddenly, "A wind's come up, Ross. I think I can smell rain. Think of it. Rain! If it once starts—"

Ross Melody joined the sheriff at the door. A wind had come up, a cool wind, with a moist, pungent smell. And then suddenly great drops splattered down into the dust of the street.

A team of horses drawing a wagon passed by the jail and pulled up in front of the Four Ace Saloon. Several men carried out a blanket-wrapped figure and laid it in the bed of the wagon. Melody, staring that way, saw Gail and her father and Alvin come out of the saloon and climb into the seat of the wagon. He thought of the long ride home which they faced together, of how their joy in the coming of the rain had been shadowed by death.

Sam Winstead got down from the wagon and turned abruptly toward the jail. He stopped near the door, looked up at Melody.

"I must have been crazy a while back," he said slowly. "I don't know—"

His voice trailed off and for a moment he stared down at the ground. Then he looked up again and said, "Gail wants to see you before we drive home. I guess you know what it's about."

"I know," said Ross Melody.

He moved out from the door and started toward the wagon with Sam Winstead.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He fell without sound. . . . I came back to look down at him; his head was gone

By GEORGE MASSELMAN

Dutch Courage

"Treat those headhunters with kindness, eh!" grunted the *Resident*. "I'll show that old idiot. . . ." And so he sent the Governor's only daughter to that dread outer island; and waited results

FROM the awning-covered bridge they watched the big liner come toward them in the beaconed channel which ran through the mudflats. She was all white and shiny in the glittering sun, and when the mate saw the glint of brass on her expansive bridge and the gaily dressed passengers lining the railing he blew the whistle.

"If he does not wait until she dips her flag first, I'll cuff him a good one," Captain Bonner said querulously. The mate repeated the warning in Malay to the sailor who had come to the bridge at the sound of the whistle. The native ran aft, the threat ringing in his ears. Even he knew that the *Astrella* was "government" and therefore owed obeisance to no one, not even to a great white liner twenty times larger.

"They did Tandjong! Now they know all about the East Indies." Captain Bonner scowled, hardly looking at the big liner but only watching how much berth she was giving him. The mate saw the passengers,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in their exuberance, waving at the little *Astrella,* but there was nothing that could move him to raise a hand in greeting.

All during the long homeward voyage from the outer islands the captain had flown off the handle at the slightest pretext and he had no intention of provoking him any more than he had to. It was but meager consolation to know that his animosity had been general and that everyone with whom the captain had come in contact for the past six weeks had suffered equally from his displeasure.

From port to port, ever since they had landed the new *Controlleur* and his wife at the Kuri Islands, the homeward trip to Tandjong could be traced by a series of unpleasant incidents and they had not always been confined to mere arguments.

The liner having been dropped astern, Captain Bonner proceeded to bring his ship into port, approaching the shoal-lined coast which showed itself as a hazy stripe overhung by the ever-scintillating heat waves of the mainland and which shut off all but the awkward mangrove treees along the shore until they were fairly upon it.

Dispensing with his glasses, and at times completely ignoring the channel, he was as sure of himself as if he did it daily instead of once every three months.

The "oppas" was at the dock waiting for the *Astrella.*

Proudly he carried his shiny briefcase which contained all the mysterious papers and envelopes which it was his duty to deliver to the captain of every government steamer as soon as it pulled into port. He looked spick and span in his khaki uniform with the orange stripes and his lacquered hat with one side of the brim stiffly upright, riveted to the crown.

On the bridge, he saluted stiffly and stood at attention while Captain Bonner accepted the mass of papers which he produced from his briefcase. The captain dismissed him with a curt wave of his hand and retired to his cabin to peruse the messages.

There were the usual orders and communications to those in charge of large chunks of the far-flung Dutch possessions, personal mail for the *Controlleurs* who tried more or less successfully to maintain authority, many of whom had no other contact with the world than the little *Astrella.* There was also the government gazette which, among other things, provided them with news of recent appointments and promotions.

AT ANY other time the mate would have followed the captain in his quarters and asked for his letters; he was young and they were important to him, but he tarried, afraid that even this simple request might start an argument.

He was glad when the doctor came on board, it helped to ease his impatience while the captain was getting around to giving him his mail. They shook hands.

"How was it out there?" the doctor asked, pointing toward the east where the *Astrella* had come from. The mate shrugged his shoulders.

"I know," the doctor agreed, it is always the same."

"No, it is not," the mate said, taking a leaf out of Captain Bonner's book.

The doctor became diplomatic. He himself had rarely been away from Tandjong, and as for the outer islands he had no desire to ever go there but he could sympathize with those who had to do so in the line of duty.

"Any illness on board?" he asked. The mate shook his head.

"If anything happens to you 'out there,' you don't come back to complain about it," he said. "You ought to know that."

"Did you lose anyone?" the doctor asked.

"Of course we did. We always do. No matter when you pull up to the Kuri Islands they are always waiting for you.

"This time we entered the bay in the middle of the night with not a light showing. But no sooner did we lower the boats than those cursed drums started to beat, first one and then others from all sides the bay, mocking and laughing at us. The new *Controlleur* and his wife, that wisp

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of a girl, were on deck ready to go into the boat and they felt none too happy about it.

" 'They are waiting for you,' I heard the captain whisper.

" 'Yes, they are waiting for us,' the *Controlleur* said.

" 'Let's go,' the girl said, 'the longer we wait the more there'll be. Once in the fort we'll be safe!'

"I thought myself that they may be safe there but only for a while, no longer than some of his predecessors had been, and by the looks of this young *Controlleur* and his wife they were not any better equipped to deal with those Kuri devils, certainly not with their childish notions about meeting the natives on their own ground. And if that wasn't enough to earmark them for sudden death he must bring his violin and she said she was going to make a study of the natives—anthropology—and was going to model their heads out of clay."

"How did you lose your man?" the doctor said, cutting the mate short.

"Between the beach and the fort, a distance of fifty paces, not a foot more.

"It was the fellow right behind me, a case on his shoulder. He never hade a sound but I heard the case drop and as I turned around I saw a shadow flit away, like it was being sucked in among the trees.

"I went back to rescue the case and as I bent down I saw that there was only a body. The head was gone. 'Keep going,' the captain shouted and I dashed after them into the fort.

"The fort was intact. It does not seem to interest them and they never touch it, not even while there is no one to guard it. All they want is heads.

"We checked up on doors and windows, seeing that the bars were working properly as it is awful to be in the fort and not know whether they can't come in and get you. The *Controlleur* and his wife were silently watching us. The six soldiers we were leaving them for a garrison did not seeem too happy either, but they were natives and you can never tell much by their faces.

"I can still see them standing there, hand in hand, waiting for us to file through the door, with a soldier ready to lower the bar in place as soon as we have gone.

" 'We'll see you in three months, Captain,' the *Controlleur* said in parting. The captain said, 'Yes, we'll see you in three months,' but he did not look at them.

"Then the bar fell into the cleats and we started looking for the sailor who had had his head cut off. Only we couldn't find him. His body had disappeared as completely as his head."

"I better go and see the captain," the doctor said.

"Mind what you say to him," the mate cautioned, "he is liable to go off like a stick of dynamite. The fact that you are the doctor won't stop him, not even if you were the *Resident*.

"He wouldn't have the nerve to buck the *Resident*," the doctor said with a knowing smile.

"That is what you think. He says he never signed up to be no blasted executioner and it was the *Resident* who sent those two kids to their doom. It is bad enough to send a man to Kuri—but a woman!"

THE doctor approached the captain's quarters gingerly, thinking that maybe the fellow who had driven the cart to the guillotine had not been so amenable either. The mate followed the doctor at a little distance; he still wanted his letters.

Almost before the doctor had disappeared through the doorway he heard the captain call him. Following the doctor into the cabin he found the captain sitting behind his desk, stacks of mail sorted out in different piles, while before him was an opened copy of the *Gazette*.

"Look at this, Akkerman," the captain shouted almost gleefully. "Look who is the newly-appointed Governor-general."

The mate glanced over the captain's shoulder, seeing the picture of a man with a sensitive face. There was something

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

slightly familiar about the face but the name meant nothing to him. The doctor, wanting to air his knowledge about the new appointment, volunteered that it was the man who in the Chamber of Deputies had consistently stood for a more enlightened attitude in colonial administration.

"Never mind that," the captain cut him short, picking up a letter from a separate stack. "Who's this letter for?" he asked the mate. The mate loked at the address.

"The wife of the *Controlleur* of the Kuri Islands," he said, wondering what the captain was driving at.

"And who is it from?" the captain wanted to know, turning the envelope over to show the name of the sender. The mate looked at it and his eyes narrowed as from there they traveled to the name under the picture of the new Governor-general.

"Holy Moses," he managed to bring out when he realized where he had seen those features before, "the *Resident* won't like that."

"You're right he won't," the captain bellowed, the look on his face taking on a more human expression. "He sent the daughter of the Governor-general to the Kuri Islands when he had fifty single men to choose from. Reach behind you, Akkerman. There is a crock of gin in that closet and some glasses. We'll drink to the *Resident* and to the blood he is sweating."

There was nothing very pleasant about the toast but they drank to it. For the moment the mate had forgotten about his letters.

"He had it coming to him," the captain said, lifting his glass and draining it. "Now watch him squirm."

The doctor did not like the atmosphere of death which seemed to hover around the *Astrella*. He had been in no close contact with the events leading up to it and consequently he could not be touched like the two men who had been instrumental in landing the *Controlleur* and his girl wife on the Kuri Islands.

He excused himself and rather hurriedly left the *Astrella* in order to find more congenial company. Personally he had no bones to pick with the *Resident*. Like the stern administrator, he, to, was of the old school and did not believe in treating the natives with kid gloves; if they did not toe the mark you had to put the whip to them.

Certainly no mere handful of whites could count on retaining their hold over some fifty million natives if they did not make their authority felt.

These new fangled ideas of kindness and equality were all well and good to talk about back home, but when you were on the spot it was a different matter. . . .

The doctor headed straight for the club, anxious to take credit for having brought this juicy bit of news into town.

THE one paper Captain Bonner looked for in vain was an order from the *Resident* to present immediately his report of the voyage just completed. Now, more than at any other time, should the *Resident* want to know under what conditions he had landed the new *Controlleur* and his wife on the Kuri Islands.

"What do you make of it, Akkerman?" he asked the mate.

"Maybe he doesn't know she is the daughter of the new G.G.," the mate suggested.

"The hell he doesn't!" the captain exploded. "That's why he was sent to the Kuri Islands. The *Controlleur* let on as much on the way out. Because his wife was the daughter of the deputy who had for years been attacking the 'iron rule' some of the old-timers baited him. They wanted to know how 'he' felt about that nonsense!

"He said that he considered it the only logical method of approach: kindness and understanding rather than might. He, moreover, made the mistake of referring to the Kuri Islands, where three *Controlleurs* had been killed and two brought back as raving maniacs, as proof of his theory.

"It was obvious, he said, that guns and wholesale executions had not done the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

least bit of good. Someone had been quick to tip off the *Resident* and before he knew what was happening, that worthy himself had entered the discussion and asked how *he* would like to try his hand at Kuri Islands instead of telling them how it should be done."

"But he was fresh out of Holland," the mate said. "He had hardly seen a native yet. Are you sure he did not ask for the appointment? I never heard of anyone being sent to the outer islands unless he had been in the Indies for at least three years."

"He did not ask for it," the captain said. "I know exactly what was in the *Resident's* mind and he must have been proud of himself for thinking of it.

"He was going to kill two birds with one stone: get even with a greenhorn *Controlleur* who had the nerve to tell him he did not know how to deal with natives, and let the daughter of the instigator of this new policy pay with her life while proving that her father was wrong."

"That guy must be hard as nails," the mate said.

"Hard? Listen, son," the captain said condescendingly, "when you have been at the top as long as the *Resident*, yours becomes the only judgment worth considering. Right or wrong seems to have very little to do with it."

"Can I have my letters now?" the mate asked after a momentary silence.

"Sure. Why didn't you ask for them before?"

Captain Bonner, contrary to his usual habit, stayed on board.

At any other time he would have left his ship in a hurry and moved into the little hotel where he spent most of his time when in Tandjong. But this time he had no such intention. Sooner or later he expected to receive his call from the *Resident* and it was for purely personal reasons that he was anxious to see him forthwith.

He was at a loss to understand why he had not as yet been called, for he was certain that for no less than a week the *Resident* could not have been thinking of anything else, just as he himself had thought of nothing else, if only for a different reason. If the *Resident* was at all concerned about the fate of those he had sent to the Kuri Islands it could only have been because of the effect it would have on his own career: One just could not let the daughter of a Governor-general have her head cut off by a bunch of howling Kuri Islanders.

Captain Bonner's concern was strictly for their own sake. He had spent some memorable evenings with them on the *Astrella* and, while inwardly sorry for their naïve conception of how to deal with the natives, he had come to admire the apparent logic with which they expounded their theories.

But Captain Bonner could not forget that, after all was said, they remained theories and that their knowledge of the Kuri Islanders was gleaned entirely from books. And books, in his experience, never had the right answer in case of emergency.

Rather than try to refute their theories by an expostulation of cold facts he would turn the conversation and ask the *Controlleur* to get his violin. Captain Bonner had no way of knowing how well he played it, especially since the other seemed to prefer the barbaric chants of the South Sea Islanders, plucking the strings in haunting tunes which he said meant war or famine or just the sun, but there were times when it was better not to talk.

With his own hands he had been forced to deliver those two to a tribe of demons who, so far, had been able to prove how little they cared for any interference in their age-old mode of living.

The girl must have known what was going through his head while they stood on deck in the darkness, after the drums had taken up their sinister warning.

Impulsively she had taken his arm and, raising herself on her toes, had kissed him on the cheek.

On the return trip his sadness had changed into an important fury which vented itself at every port.

Deftly and deliberately he had steered

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the conversation until the unsuspecting traders unwittingly expressed themselves about methods of governing which were contrary to those believed in by the *Controlleur* of Kuri—and that, in the outer islands, meant everyone. After the first shock of being suddenly denounced as butchers and hypocrites the others would readily accept the challenge, raising the discussion to the level of violent argument, if not to physical combat.

AND now he was waiting. At that moment the Kuri Islands must be the only topic of conversation: in homes, at the government offices, in the club. But Captain Bonner had no need of going among them and adding to his knowledge on the subject; in the end the *Resident,* himself, would have to summon him.

It was after nightfall when the "oppas" finally arrived while he and the mate were eating in the tiny messroom. There was just one letter, heavily sealed in government fashion. The mate saw a smile grow on the captain's face.

"Tonight. Right away. As soon as possible," he said, and proceeded to finish his dinner.

Afterward, instead of taking a taxi he decided upon a "kossong," thinking that the two little ponies would bring him there more slowly.

From the harbor it was a good half hour to the town, first through the Arab quarter, then through the Chinese. Beyond them the business section began, offices and warehouses of the traders, the banks, the prison and the barracks. He had to go even further than that, to where the town became like a park with houses, large and small, hidden among trees.

The *Resident's* mansion stood in the edge of a square. Large as it was it was almost completely hidden by trees and shrubs which gave off the heavy scent of tropical flowers, heavier still because it was night.

At the gate was the sentry box. The native, seeing the gold crown and anchor on the captain's cap, let him pass without question.

A wide veranda surrounded the house on all sides, easy rattan chairs placed here and there in intimate little groups. A man, bareheaded, dressed in the conventional white tunic, was slowly pacing back and forth. The sound of the crunching wheels over the gravel path made him look up and he came to the steps.

"Captain Bonner?" he asked, having only met him at rare intervals when the captain had been able to attend some of the official receptions.

"At your service, *Resident,*" the captain said. He knew the short, squat body topped by a round face, sallow from many years of tropical sun. He seems sure of himself, the captain thought, when the other made no effort to waste any time in preliminaries but asked the captain to follow him to the office. He seated himself behind his desk, indicating a chair for his guest.

"There are some questions, Captain." On the desk was a detailed map of the Kuri Islands. "How far back from the shore is the fort?"

"Fifty paces about," the captain said.

"Is there any obstruction between it and the bay?"

"It is all clear, but the path runs along the fringe of the woods."

"Never mind the path," the *Resident* said. The tone of his voice made the captain squeeze his eyes. "Could a boat pull up close to the shore and see the fort clearly?"

"A small boat could; in daytime."

"Could a fifty-foot motor boat at night, with a powerful searchlight?"

"Yes, that too would show the fort clearly."

"And could one hear what was going on in the fort from that distance?"

"If there was a lot of noise one could."

Captain Bonner began to resent the questions. They seemed like a game, a silly little pastime without bearing. But he was not to be left in the dark for long. The *Resident* looked up from the chart.

"In that case," he said impassively, "the *Controlleur* and his wife are dead."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"DEAD?" Inwardly he had known it would turn out this way; perhaps not yet while he was making the homeward voyage, but sooner or later; yes, certainly within the three months that he would be away from the Kuri Islands.

But to be told by the *Resident* now, and in this manner, was still jolting. All the remembrances of his two passengers, coupled with his growing resentment that he had been the one to carry them to their doom—and what a doom!—clamored for a voice.

"You killed them!" he said, and then once more: "You killed them!"

"Captain Bonner." The voice was cool. In its impersonal quality it embodied not the *Resident's* attitude about being accused of murder by one of his subordinates, but that of the whole government. "You are upset. I have forgotten what you just said."

Captain Bonner fought the unflinching eyes in the bullet-head across the desk. He realized that the wind had been taken out of his sails. He had allowed himself to fly off the handle and it had not made so much as a dent. Calmly the *Resident* went on, almost as if nothing had been said which had overstepped the boundary of polite governmental discussion.

"Ten days ago I cabled the *Assistant-Resident* at Baruta to run over to Kuri and report on the situation. Here in his report. It arrived late this afternoon." He handed Captain Bonner a cablegram. In its cryptic language it said:

APPROACHED SHORE AFTER NIGHTFALL STOP HEARD BARBARIC NOISE INSIDE FORT SHOUTING SCREECHING DRUMS STOP PLAYED SEARCHLIGHT ON FORT AND SAW TWO BAMBOO POLES SURMOUNTED BY HEADS STOP BOTH UNMISTAKABLY EUROPEAN ONE WITH LONG BLOND HAIR STOP HAVING ONLY FOUR MEN ONBOARD TURNED BACK WHEN DOORS FLEW OPEN AND NATIVES EMERGED.

Captain Bonner handed the cable back. It proved why the *Resident* had not summoned him sooner. It also explained the questions; and it must have been just about ten days ago that the appointment of the new Governor-general could have become known to him. It all fitted, but what of it?

"A whisky-soda, Captain?" the *Resident* asked.

"Yes, please," he said tonelessly. The *Resident* clapped his hands. Without a sound a boy appeared to whom he gave his orders in curt, snappy Malay.

"They never took the fort before," the *Resident* said after the boy had left. "How do you account for it that they dared take it now?"

"That's hard to say," the captain said. It seemed to make little difference.

"Do you think it possible that the *Controlleur* with his enlightened ideas might have asked them in, say a few at the time?"

"Yes, it is possible."

"Didn't he tell you he was glad in a way about being able to prove his theories on the Kuri Islanders?"

"Yes, he did. But that was because . . ." The *Resident* interrupted him, repeating his question. Captain Bonner shifted his eyes from the chart at which he had been looking sideways.

"Yes, several times, but . . ." This time it was he who stopped, noticing suddenly that the *Resident* was not looking at him but over his shoulder. He turned his head and saw the boy standing in the doorway, the tray in his upraised hands. He was taking in every word that had been said.

"Put it here, on the desk," the *Resident* said. A sudden flash of comprehension shot through the captain's head. The *Resident* had spoken in Dutch this time, using this method of letting Captain Bonner know that there had been a witness to his statement that the *Controlleur* was trying to make the best of a bad bargain. But the boy had already disappeared, making the captain an additional witness to prove in time to come that the *Controlleur* had wanted to go to the Kuri Islands of his own volition even up to the moment of landing.

INWARDLY boiling, he watched the *Resident* fill the glasses. And he saw how his hand was steady and the bland, austere look on his face completely unchanged. And, as if to allow the full im-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

port of the episode to sink in, the *Resident* remained silent, not even saying the conventional "Your health," but drinking quietly, the only sound being the fizzing of the soda bubbles as they rose to the surface.

But this was not yet the end.

"What do they do with the skeletons, Captain? It is commonly known that they keep them intact."

"They keep them in their 'big house' somewhere in the interior of the island," Captain Bonner said curtly.

"We'll get them," the *Resident* said, "if I have to kill off every Kuri Islander. The new Governor-general is not here yet. There is still time to teach those devils the lesson of their life . . . with their lives, if necessary."

Captain Bonner said nothing. The *Resident* had beaten him at every turn. Now it was even ludicrous to have imagined that he would find him groveling and submissive. The rest of the conversation was strictly impersonal, even more so than their earlier discussions.

A complete detachment of colonials was to go to the Kuri Islands. The *Astrella*, being too slow a gunboat, would go fully equipped with long-range guns to bomb the natives out of their mountain haunts if necessary. Captain Bonner and his mate were to come along, as they knew the Kuri Islands better than anybody . . . "and I will go too," the *Resident* wound up, leaving no doubt as to his intentions.

He picked up his telephone and gave his orders both to the barracks and to the base.

"Be on board the *Panther* at six tomorrow morning, Captain," he said in parting. "You'll be returning to the Kuri Islands sooner than you had expected."

Sickened, Captain Bonner drove back to the *Astrella*. He himself could have no love for the Kuri Islanders but to be roped in on an expedition of wholesale slaughter was something which nauseated him. Neither did he give much credence to the punitive qualities of the *Resident's* motive. It was beyond punishment to exterminate a whole tribe.

The mate was waiting for him but Captain Bonner had returned to his former surliness. Beyond telling him to pack his things and be on the *Panther* at six he told him nothing of what had transpired at the *Resident's* house.

ON THE *Panther* there was plenty of excitement, and her crew had been hard put to get everything in readiness. During the night the colonials had come on board, and extra provisions and fuel had been loaded.

A few minutes before six, just when the sun broke out of the Java Sea, the *Resident* drove up to the dock. He was received at the gangplank by the naval lieutenant who was in charge of the gunboat.

At exactly four bells her lines were thrown loose and she steamed out of the harbor.

Making no stops the voyage was cut to a little over a week and during that time Captain Bonner rarely mingled with the other officers.

A few times, in the messroom, he had had to listen to the proposed strategy with which the *Resident* intended dealing with the Kuri Islanders. Those few times had been enough for Captain Bonner, and he told his mate to keep out of it as well.

"Let those butchers do what they like; you and I are not going to have any truck with it." And that settled it. Not until they approached the Kuri Islands did their job begin and then only in some sort of advisory capacity.

On a dark night, having slowed down to time their arrival after sundown, the *Panther* glided into the bay.

The perfected plan of attack to which Captain Bonner had finally been forced to listen, because he was too, take part in it, was that the fort was to be approached from three sides. While the *Panther* would train her guns on the fort the machine guns would be taken ashore. The powerful searchlights from the gunboat would not only light up the scene of battle but would also serve to blind the natives.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Almost without a sound the boats were lowered, Captain Bonner being assigned to the one which carried the *Resident*. When all the boats were in the water they began to move simultaneously. Not until a prearranged signal had been given would the *Panther* play her searchlight on the fort and on the open space in front of it.

As they pulled toward the shore in fanlike fashion Captain Bonner heard the drums, but instead of coming from different directions, as they always had, they came now only from the fort.

Louder and louder the noise grew as they came nearer and then, also, other sounds emerged from out of the measured tomtom of the drums: screeching, and a haunting chant which sent a chill down his spine.

In those few minutes he thought very bitterly of a great many things. The obdurate stupidity of beaurocrats. The nastiness of official pride. The complacent cruelty of rulers.

But dominant against that dark background was the picture of the new *Controlleur* and his girl-wife, as he had seen them last—going into that fort, the doors closing behind them.

And now this devil's chant coming from those doors!

But the bedlam assisted them in landing their boats which slid softly against the beach. The soldiers waded to the shore, carrying their machine guns and other equipment and quickly setting them up for action. One boat carried a battering ram. This was to break down the main door of the fort which opened into the large room where the natives would undoubtedly be congregated.

It was being brought into readiness right where Captain Bonner was standing with the *Resident*. The *Resident* was no coward and intended to follow right behind the ram, among the first to enter the fort. In his hand he brandished a revolver.

THERE was no letup in the deafening noise which came from the fort while they waited for all three landing parties to get ready for action. The *Resident* was becoming impatient. Under his breath he was cursing the party on the left flank which had not yet reported. Finally it came, a shadow flitting along the beach.

"All set with the ram?" he asked the lieutenant who was to guide it.

"All set with the ram," came the whispered reply. The men hunched forward, five on either side, crouched and ready for the short sprint across the clearing.

Simultaneously with the shot the whole clearing and the fort were thrown into a sea of light.

Running alongside the *Resident*, Captain Bonner got a glimpse of some half dozen bamboo poles with heads on them. It could not have taken more than a few seconds to traverse the clearing, the ram aiming straight for the door.

In the light it looked like some prehistoric animal, a giant centipede. Captain Bonner began to feel the tension.

If they wanted to strike at all it had to be done quickly and that ram should not meet with too much resistance.

And now it occurred to Captain Bonner that this was a very foolish boys' game, with no stakes at all. The armed might of Holland, concentrated this night into a battle where there could be no victory—no outcome but slaughter and lasting regret.

If the ram did *not* meet too much resistance—well, what then? He, and the *Resident*, and the landing party could look at—and take away—the outraged bodies of two fine persons. Two whom Captain Bonner had come to think of as friends.

So the game started, with ten men pushing a pole. Bonner watched it.

Inwardly he had his doubts whether even a gunboat and soldiers could cope with a tribe of uncanny Kuri Islanders once they had a chance to disappear into the jungle. . . .

He froze in his tracks when the ram, instead of banging up against the door, went right through it. The soldiers, not meeting the expected resistance, tumbled

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

headlong forward and fell in a grotesque heap on the floor inside.

By the light from a number of oil lamps hanging from the ceiling, he saw a great many Kuri Islanders, some standing, some sitting, while facing them stood the *Controlleur,* violin in hand as if he were directing a band.

On the other side of the room were the women, all seated on the floor, carving at cocoanuts, among them stood the *Controlleur's* wife, still in the act of pointing as if she were explaining something. . . .

And then Captain Bonner laughed.

He laughed so hard he had to lean against the doorpost to keep from falling down. The Kuri Islanders, remaining in their places, all turned their heads to the door and, hearing the booming laughter of the white man, began to laugh too. So did the soldiers who came running up from all directions.

Perhaps they laughed, not for the same reason as the captain—only at being released from the strain they had been under—but nevertheless they laughed.

The only one who did not laugh was the *Resident.* His face a fiery red he walked up to the *Controlleur* who, still holding his violin, met him halfway, a puzzled expression on his face.

"What is the meaning of all this nonsense, *Controlleur?*"

"This is our singing class, *Resident.* Their own songs; they like them better than ours."

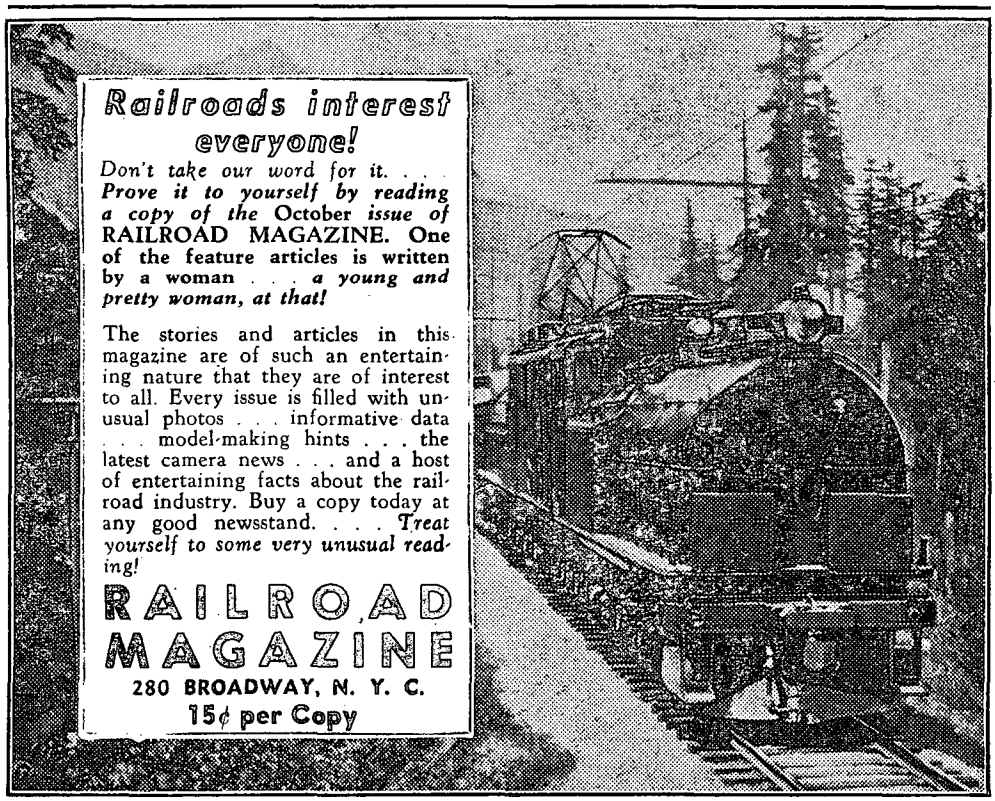
"And what about those heads outside?"

"They are carved cocoanuts. We put our own up there first and now they all want their heads on a pole. It pleases them because they keep better than the real ones."

Captain Bonner began to laugh again.

The soldiers too and the Kuri Islanders, thinking it was a signal, followed suit. But not the *Resident.*

From now on, throughout all his life, there could be but one meaning to any laughter which reached his ears.


Railroads interest everyone!
Don't take our word for it. . . .
Prove it to yourself by reading a copy of the October issue of RAILROAD MAGAZINE. One of the feature articles is written by a woman . . . a young and pretty woman, at that!
The stories and articles in this magazine are of such an entertaining nature that they are of interest to all. Every issue is filled with unusual photos . . . informative data . . . model-making hints . . . the latest camera news . . . and a host of entertaining facts about the railroad industry. Buy a copy today at any good newsstand. . . . Treat yourself to some very unusual reading!
RAILROAD MAGAZINE
280 BROADWAY, N. Y. C.
15¢ per Copy

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hurricane Range

By LUKE SHORT

COMING into that vast grazeland known as the Indian Nations, Frank Christian, cattleman, soon discovers that he must make war before he can ride herd. His partner, Morg Wheelon, has been mysteriously murdered; and Frank cannot take over the lease that is rightfully his because of two powerful enemies—Chet Milabel, foreman of the Reservation Cattle Company, and Scott Corb, a ruthless and treacherous trader who controls the Indians by selling them whisky. These two are determined to drive Frank Christian off the Indian Nations.

Framed for whisky peddling, jailed, and at length a hunted man, Frank Christian still doggedly fights back. His crew diminishes to two men, the wild Irishman, Red Shibe, and Old Otey Fleer; but besides these Frank has only one friend—Hopewell Barnes. Barnes' lovely daughter, Luvie, is attracted to Frank, and yet she attempts to betray him, fearing that he will get her father into serious trouble.

SCOTT CORB maneuvers so shrewdly that Frank becomes a wanted man with a price on his head. At length he is captured by Army troopers; and by now Corb's strategy has aroused the Cheyenne braves to such a pitch that the whole settlement fears an Indian raid. That night a party of Cheyennes do strike, in an entirely unexpected way; silently they rescue Frank Christian and set him free. Once again Frank can battle for his claim on the range, and now he discovers a valuable clue—that the unknown murderer of his partner wears a patched spur. . . .

CHAPTER XXIV

FACE TO SLUG

CORB could read Indian signs as well as any man in the Nations. When news was brought to him at his place that Frank Christian had been captured, but only after he and his crew had killed seven Cheyennes, Corb's face showed no elation. The good news was more than cancelled by the bad.

He had miscalculated on several things. He hadn't counted on Christian throwing in with Barnes; and above all, he hadn't counted on Barnes fighting the Indians. The big fat fool, probably egged on by that wild Red Shibe and Christian, had lost his head, and it looked as if the fat was in the fire. And Corb didn't like Indian trouble. It scared him.

He declined to join the card game that

The first installment of this five-part serial, herein concluded, was published in the Argosy for August 19

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

night and waited impatiently for his riders to drift in from Reno with their reports. And each man returning from Reno had a story of increasing gravity. The Indians had deserted the post and the agency, and trouble was brewing in their camp.

Long after his riders had turned in, Corb sat up waiting for the last of his men, Beach Freeman. Well after midnight he heard Beach's horse cross the corral lot to the horse pasture. Beach was singing drunk, and Corb, playing a nervous game of solitaire on the big table, listened to it and his eyes narrowed.

When Beach came into the house, tramped through the back rooms and stuck his head in the front room to see who was up, Corb was smoking a thin cigar, his chair backtilted against the wall and his hands idle.

"Howdy, Boss," Beach said, and grinned.

"Come in." Corb said.

Beach was already swaggering into the room. He threw his hat down on the table and sank into a chair. Corb eyed him with cold distaste.

Beach said, "Looks like they're goin' to nail Frank's hide up for sure."

Corb didn't say anything.

"They're takin' him to Kansas tomorrow morning."

Corb said, "What about the Indians?"

Beach grinned. "They're dancin' tonight. You can hear the drums at the post. Everybody's driftin' into the garrison. The whole damn country's scared."

"And you're not," Corb said dryly.

"Of what?" Beach answered. "Them black devils has only got bows and arrows and spears."

Corb didn't bother to tell him that he himself had picked up a little money by running guns to the Indians until he saw that his shortsighted policy might result in getting himself shot, along with all the other whites. Corb got up, walked around the table and paused in front of Beach.

"Kid, you drink too much," Corb said narrowly. "Better quit it."

But drunken talk or not, Corb knew truth when he heard it; and Beach's information gave him an uneasy night. By next noon, Corb could stand it no longer. He dressed in a fresh black suit and clean shirt, and announced to his crew that he was riding into Reno until this Indian scare was over. He'd advise them to do the same. Turn the horses loose and leave the place. And any man caught selling liquor to an Indian had better take the money and get out of the country before he found it out. He ordered the buckboard hitched and drove off toward Reno without another word. Beach Freeman was the first to saddle up and catch up with him. Three others followed, and the rest decided to come later.

THE garrison, as Beach had informed him last night, was filling up. All the agency folk from Darlington had moved over to the hotel during the morning, and Corb was hard put to get a room. The saloon was thronged and off on the flats behind the wagon yard a cluster of tents was going up. The garrison was policed and guarded this morning by sentries, and there was a tension in the air in spite of the holiday spirit.

Corb greeted a few friends, then headed for the barber shop; and Beach, who had been tagging him around, ducked into the sutler's bar as soon as Corb was gone.

Corb had a long wait for a chair, but finally took his turn. His lank pale hair was cut and then the barber stretched him out for a shave.

He was lathering Corb's face, listening idly to the leisurely chatter of the customers when an Army orderly came in the door.

"Corb here?" he asked.

Corb twisted his head and answered, "Here."

"Major's compliments, Mr. Corb. He wants to see you."

"Now?"

"I reckon so, sir."

Corb's face was wiped clean of lather; he rose, put on his loose black tie, and went out with the orderly. They crossed

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the parade ground and Corb was ushered into the administration office. In the largest corner room Major Corning was pacing the floor in front of his big desk, behind which was the American flag and several regimental colors. A burly captain looking a little the worse for wear was seated in a chair, but at Cobb's entrance he rose too.

The Major dismissed the orderly, then said to Corb, "This is Captain McEachern, Corb."

They didn't shake hands, and Corb only got the briefest nod from the captain.

"Sit down," Major Corning invited brusquely.

Corb took a chair and Major Corning sat on the desk. He had a studious face and thin sandy hair, but right now his jaw was set and his pale eyes altogther unpleasant.

"Corb," he said bluntly, "this is once you've gone a little too far. That affair last night cinched it."

Corb's frown was cautious. He observed the captain glaring at him, and a blind man could see that Major Corning was angry.

"You've got the best of me," Corb said slowly. "I don't know what you're talking about."

Major Corning's face took on some color. "I expected that," he snapped. "Captain, tell your story. Then we'll get down to business."

Captain McEachern told in detail of how his camp had been raided by Indians last night. They had tied him and his sentries and his scout and had then taken Frank Christian away from them. They left with the promise that they would kill Christian for his slaughter of the seven bucks during the fight with the trail herders. "When the camp roused at daylight and found me and the horses, Christian was gone," he finished.

Corb didn't speak for a moment, and then he said dryly, "And you think I sent them?"

Major Corning said, "It was you and Milabel who induced the agent to put a price on Christian's head. It was you who tried to corner him at Barnes' place. I don't concern myself much with the rows between you cattlemen, but I do know you and Christian have been feuding ever since he came here. And those Indians mentioned your name."

Corb said gently, his face cautious, his eyes wary, "It couldn't be done. Not by me."

Major Corning leaned toward Corb, and his mouth was grim. "Let's be frank, Corb. Or I will. I know you peddle whisky here on the reservation. You peddle it to the Indians, against the law. I've tried more than once to get evidence against you, but I can't do it. Still, I know you're guilty. I also know that you have influence with a certain faction of the Cheyennes, and that you claim to be their lease agent for these reservation lands." He paused to glare at Corb. "When you tell me you haven't enough influence with the Indians to pull off something like last night, I say you're a liar!"

CORB'S eyes flickered with anger, but his face didn't change. He leaned back in his chair, drew out a cigar, lighted it, and threw the match on the floor.

"I'm not admitting anything," he murmured. "But supposing what you say is true, what do you propose to do?"

"Arrest you."

"On what grounds?"

"Seizing a prisoner from United States soldiers and killing him."

Corb smiled under his roan mustache. "I'm no lawyer, Major, but I know if you're going to prove murder you've got to have a body. Have you got one?"

Major Corning said, "No," reluctantly.

"Witnesses?"

"My interpreter," Captain McEachern said angrily.

"Did he see me?"

"No. But he heard your Indians mention you."

"Anybody can mention my name," Corb said softly. "If someone wanted to throw the blame on me, he'd be mighty sure

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to mention my name." He spread his hands. "You haven't got a body, you haven't got a witness, and I'll bet money you haven't questioned a single Indian."

"We can't, damit!" the Major exploded. "We don't know who they are."

Corb smiled. "Your case won't hold water, Major."

"Then I'll get you for setting those bucks to raiding Hopewell Barnes' trail herd!"

"I don't think you will," Corb said shrewdly. "You know and I know that the agency beef ration isn't half enough to feed these Indians. You've winked at their raiding passing herds for years. Punch them this time and you'll have an insurrection of starving Indians."

Major Corning came off the desk and started to pace the room, glaring at Corb. And Corb, for his part, was smiling, regarding his cigar and rolling it between his fingers.

"The trouble with all this, Major, is that you're bluffing," he said mildly. "You went about it wrong. If you had anything on me, you wouldn't be arguing. And if you go through with my arrest and try me with no evidence, you'll get a reprimand." He glanced evenly at the major, who was eyeing him in wrath. "And every major wants to be a colonel, doesn't he?"

Corb had the whip hand, and he knew it, and he was a man who had got ahead by pressing his advantage. He leaned forward and said evenly, "Do you still say I'm under arrest, Major?"

Captain McEachern and Major Corning looked at each other, and Corb could tell what they were thinking. Time and again they had tried to get evidence of his whiskey running and herd-raiding and had failed. That left only the seizure of Frank Christian. And McEachern's report in court would be humiliating to the service, and would bring a reprimand on the major. They were, in other words, not willing to take the risk.

Corb rose. "I take it I'm not under arrest."

"One last thing, Corb," Major Corning said in a voice trembling with anger. "I'm commandant of this post. In an emergency, I have emergency orders. And in order to hold you here until we get evidence, I'm putting every white on this reservation under protective arrest and confining them to the military reservation. That means you."

Corb laughed gently. "You couldn't drive me off, Major. Good day." And he sauntered back to the barber shop in the late afternoon sun. He wished he knew what had happened to Christian, though.

AFTER Stone Bull had left the Barnes place all of them decided that it was no longer safe for Edith to be alone nights at her place, and Luvie had her stay the night.

Next morning, when Luvie wakened, Edith was gone. So was Red. There wasn't so much as a note to indicate why they had left or for where. Luvie roused Otey and her father, and after a look in the stable Otey came with the information that their horses were gone, too.

"But where?" Luvie asked. "They can't go anywhere during this Indian scare!"

A week ago Otey would have bitterly denounced Red for running out on them, but now he held his tongue.

"If Edith's with Red, she's safe," Otey said slowly. "It ain't important. What we got to do is go over to the post and see what's happenin'."

"All of us," Barnes said firmly. "If the Indians break out, they'll come here first. And I don't intend to have Luvie here. Last night, at Major Corning's insistence, I engaged rooms in the hotel for the lot of us. Now move, Luvie, and get us some breakfast. We're leaving the place right away."

But after a hurried breakfast, Otey leaned back in his chair and stated that he was not leaving. If Stone Bull's ruse worked and Frank was free, he would come here first. If he didn't find anyone, where could he go? Otey was adamant in the face of Luvie's and Barnes' arguments, so they left him and joined the stream of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Darlington townspeople who were moving over to the protection of the garrison.

The post was thronged, but Luvie, following Otey's advice, secured a chair on the porch in front of the post store and settled down to a day of waiting and watching. Around noon she was rewarded by seeing Captain McEachern's crestfallen detail return to the post empty-handed, and for the first time in twenty-four hours she breathed easily again. She started out to find her father, but in ten steps she saw him leaning against a porch post talking to a group of men. When he saw her he nodded his head and winked solemnly at her, and she knew he had seen too.

She forgot about eating and took up her vigil again. One part of Red's plan had worked; would the other part work too?

In early afternoon she saw Scott Corb, dressed in a neat black suit and polished boots climb the porch steps. At his heels was a fresh-faced and arrogant young man wearing shiny new boots and a new dust-colored Stetson. The expression on his face made Luvie want to laugh. He looked as if he were inordinately proud of his new outfit and at the same time as if his boots were so new that they hurt him to walk. But what was most incongruous of all was that he should be with Corb. There were others with Corb, still-faced, hard-eyed and dirty men, and this raw young man looked like a sheep among wolves.

Barnes had seen Corb come too, and now he sagged into a chair beside Luvie. They knew what to look for, and kept their attention on the doors of the administration building across the parade ground. It was a matter of only a few minutes before an orderly left the administration offices and walked purposefully toward the hotel, threading through the crowd. He went into the barber shop and in a minute came out again. Scott Corb was with him, and they went directly to the administration building.

Barnes looked at Luvie, a grim smile on his face. "It looks like business," he grunted. "Now you go get something to eat."

"But I want to wait and see what happens to him!" Luvie said.

"Go get something to eat at the restaurant. I'll watch. Now run along."

It took Luvie an impatient half hour to get a place in the crowded restaurant. Even when she was served she found that her excitement had evaporated her hunger, but she struggled bravely with unwanted food.

When she finally finished and returned to her father, she took one look at his chestfallen face and said, "Dad, what happened?"

"Corb's free," Barnes said gloomily. He looked up at her, his face puzzled. "Somethin' went wrong, Luvie. He walked out of there alone and went into the barber shop whistlin'."

Luvie sank into a chair, staring at him. "And Frank?"

"He must be loose," Barnes reasoned. "How come the detail came in empty-handed? And how come Corb was called to the major's office?" He shook his head and sighed. "He's just too damn big to knock over, girl. That's all." He looked obliquely at her. "If you was a boy instead of a girl I'd ask you to come along with me."

"Where?"

"To the bar. I'm goin' to try and get the taste of that out of my mouth." He got up and left.

LUVIE settled back in her chair to await darkness and word from Otey, struggling against the disappointment she felt. If Corb had been arrested and held by the army, then there would have been some chance for Frank. He could return and clear his name of all these fantastic charges. But now it seemed hopeless. What was to stop Frank from talking with Otey and deciding that this country was too hot for him and heading back for Texas? What was keeping him here? Nothing, now.

She started conversation with an agency woman beside her, so she wouldn't think of these things. In a few moments the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

word passed through the crowd that all persons were forbidden to leave the military reservations. It was confirmed when the guard was doubled on all four sides of the grounds. Rumor had it that the Indians were certain to attack now, and that the garrison was really in a state of siege. Orders were posted on the post office bulletin board that one mess hall was being set aside for civilian use, and this bore out the rumor. Out of the parade grounds where it was relatively quiet it was easy to hear the sound of the distant Indian drums, and opinion was that the Cheyenne were now inducing the more peaceful Arapaho to join the coming insurrection.

Just before dark a scouting detail rode up the slope from Darlington herding a handful of whites who had elected to risk the Indian attack. Their orders had been to round up all the whites in Darlington and force them to accept Army protection. And among those whites was Otey, his face angry and his jaw set.

Luvie ran out toward the stables, and met him coming out.

"What about Frank?" she asked.

"Didn't come," Otey growled. "Probably waitin' until dark. And them damn yellowlegs wouldn't let me stay at the house." He glared at her. "Whose neck am I riskin', anyhow?"

"They won't let anybody go out of the garrison grounds, either," Luvie said.

"They're not keepin' me here," Otey retorted. "Wait till it gets dark. I'm goin' to meet Frank and the whole Army can't stop me!"

Barnes called them all to supper then. While Otey ate, Luvie told him of what had happened that day. It was almost certain that Frank was free. But Corb hadn't been held by the Army. He was here at the post now, confined like all the others by the army edict.

Otey said little, and when he finished eating he excused himself and left. Luvie, half sick with worry and sunk in the deepest gloom, went up to her room and lay down on the bed, staring at the ceiling. If only she could turn back the calendar to that afternoon when Corb induced her to betray Frank. All this was her fault, and she had only herself to thank. But what hurt most, what she would never forget, was the quiet steady way Frank Christian had told her that he never wanted to see her again. There was no use fooling herself; she hadn't been woman enough to recognize a real man when she saw him, and now she had lost him.

She was roused from her thoughts by a knock on the door and Otey stepped in. Without a word he crossed over to a chair and sat down.

"No luck, Otey?"

"They got all the horse corrals guarded and wouldn't give me my horse. When I tried to break through the line of sentries I got throwed back twice."

LUVIE didn't say anything. If Frank returned to the house tonight, he would think they all had forsaken him. Why wouldn't he ride out for Texas? Luvie looked over at Otey, at his bitter face and his expression of wounded pride. She laughed ruefully and Otey grinned.

Barnes came in then. His face was purple with anger, and he slammed his hat down on the bed. When he caught sight of Otey, he said, "Otey, give me your gun."

"What for?" Otey asked.

"Corb has got a rider down there that I'm goin' to fill so full of lead he couldn't float on hard butter."

Luvie came over to him. "Why, Dad. I've never seen you this way. What is it?"

"I've taken enough rawhidin'! He's a fresh kid, and drunk. He started rawhidin' me about killin' those Indians. Said if it wasn't for us and for Frank there wouldn't be an Indian scare. Corb shut him up, but he's still talkin' pretty wide about Frank."

Luvie nodded. "I saw him. But he's only a boy. You couldn't fight him."

Otey's attention sharpened. "What did he look like?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"He's got a face that makes you itch to slug it. Young, thin, light hair, green eyes, spoiled mouth."

Otey came slowly to his feet. "You hear anybody name him?"

"Corb called him Beach."

"Ah," Otey said. He started for the door.

Barnes said, "Where you goin'?"

"To pay a call," Otey said. "You stay here."

He went downstairs to the porch and walked along it till he came to the big window of the sutler's bar. The place was thronged, but looking through the window he could see Corb and four of his men at the corner table playing poker. And at the bar, back turned to it and elbows on it watching the game, was Beach Freeman, a glass in his hand.

So Beach hadn't gone back to Texas, Otey thought sourly. And he knew he had the answer to something that had been troubling him a long time. How had Corb known that a note from Luvie would toll Frank into Barnes' place for that bushwhack, unless somebody had told him? That somebody was Beach, who had heard enough and seen enough around the chuck wagon to put two and two together. Otey felt a hot wrath crawling inside him, but it wasn't so hot that he lost his head.

He slipped back into the darkness, walked down the long porch, through the gate into the wagon compound, where a lantern was hanging over the feed office door, and into the stable. He took the stable lantern off its nail and climbed into the hayloft. There, as was almost always the case in any public stable loft, were a half dozen men asleep. They were the riff-raff, the drunks, and the men down on their luck.

Otey looked them over and when he came to one bleary and unshaven sleeper, he stirred him with his toe. The man roused and Otey said, "You want to earn five dollars?"

"Sure."

"Come along."

Outside the stable door, Otey smelled the sour smell of long drunk whiskey on the man's breath, and he knew he had chosen wisely. He gave the man a five dollar gold piece and the man looked at it and said, "What do I do?"

"Go in the sutler's bar and drink it up," Otey said. "First, though, do you know Beach Freeman?"

"No."

"Ask the bartender. He'll point him out. Tell Beach that the hostler says that if he don't pay his feed bill tonight he's goin' to turn his horse loose. You got it?"

The man repeated it after him and then left in a hurry for the bar. Otey knew that Beach didn't owe a feed bill. But the threat of having his horse turned loose, even if by mistake, would bring him out. And the messenger, with drinking money in his fist, couldn't be pried away from the bar.

Otey drifted over to the shadow of the wagon shed and waited. It was five minutes before he heard a man swing into the compound gate. Beach swaggered into the circle of lantern light, his face belligerent, his eyes on the feed office door.

From the corner of the office, Otey drawled, "Hello, Beach."

Beach hauled up, and stared into the darkness. When Otey stepped into the light, his gun leveled at Beach, there was a moment of utter silence. Beach licked his lips, and slowly his hands raised over his head.

"Step over, Beach," Otey drawled. "I never liked your face, and I reckon it's about time I made it over."

And Beach came, his mouth dry and his throat tight, into the darkness.

CHAPTER XXV

DELIVER OR FIGHT

MILABEL took his siesta on the couch in his office every afternoon during hot weather. It was a custom he had picked up from the *pelados* in south Texas, and one which nothing short of a trail drive could interrupt—not even an Indian scare. His crew, full strength and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

confident of their numbers, had elected to wait out this one at the ranch; and Milabel had sided with them. Even in case of trouble he favored taking a chance and saving the company property.

This afternoon he lay at full length on the couch, a *Stockman's Gazette* over his face to shut out the sunlight. He was just on the drawsy borderland of sleep when he felt the couch sag abruptly. It took some seconds for his sleepy brain to telegraph the news to his hands that someone had just sat down on the couch near his feet.

He opened his eyes, raised his hands to the *Gazette,* lifted it, and saw Frank Christian sitting by his knees. What yanked him awake was the black barrel of the Colt .45 which he was looking into.

Milabel groaned. "You again. I thought you was in jail." There was no fear in his voice, only disgust and amazement.

Frank didn't smile. In fact, his face looked as if he never intended to smile again. His cheeks were haggard, and his eyes were deep-sunk, sultry, the color of roiled smoke. There was a grimness in his unsmiling mouth, an altertness in his movements and manner that told Milabel he was looking at trouble.

Frank tossed something on Milabel's chest and said, "That yours?" watching him carefully.

Milabel leisurely picked up the object and looked at it. It was a silver spur rowel as large as a dollar with wickedly sharp points and some fine hammered work design. The fork and part of the shank were attached to the rowel, but just beyond the fork the shank had been broken off. Milabel looked up and said, "No. It ain't mine."

Frank stood up and said, "Get on your feet!"

His voice had iron in it, and Milabel obeyed with alacrity.

"Turn around."

Milabel did, and Frank knelt to look at his spurs. They were plain, with a gooseneck shank and small blunt rowel.

"Got any other spurs?" Frank asked.

Milabel turned around. "No."

"Where do you sleep?"

Milabel nodded toward the door into an adjoining room. "Why?"

"Get in there and pull all your stuff out and throw it on the floor. Go on."

Frank prodded him into the bedroom. Angrily, Milabel dumped the contents of drawers in a pile on the floor. Then his clothes followed, until every single thing he owned lay stacked in the middle of the floor. His broad face was beet red when he had finished. Frank said, "That all?"

"Listen, Christian. I ain't got but one pair of spurs. What in hell are you after?"

"You don't know?"

"I don't know nothin'!" Milabel said angrily. "I don't know how you got past my guards! Now that you're here I don't know what you're after!"

Frank looked at him steadily. "I'm after Morg Wheelon's killer, Milabel. That spur rowel was lost the night Morg was gunned. The man who lost it killed Morg, and he's still wearin' the patched spur."

Milabel's broad face was grim looking. He looked steadily at Frank and said, "You know that for sure?"

"I got it from a man who saw the fight."

Milabel nodded. "And you're here to see if I'm wearin' the patched spur, or any of my men, eh?"

"That's right."

MILABEL said harshly, "Christian, you and me have tangled plenty, and we'll tangle again, I reckon. But you ain't learned yet that even if I run a tough outfit here, I run a straight one. You found us in Wheelon's place because we wanted his range and we moved onto it after he was killed. But that's a hell of a lot different than killin' a man in cold blood. I wouldn't kill a man like that and I'd see any man in my crew hung that did it. And I'm goin' to prove it to you."

"You sure are," Frank said softly.

"You can carry that gun or throw it away," Milabel said: "It don't make no

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

difference. You're goin' to see everything this outfit owns!"

He strode past Frank and into the office. His shellbelt and gun were lying under his hat. He picked up his Stetson, paying no attention to the gun, and tramped out the door. Frank followed him over to the long bunkhouse where a couple of men were lounging in the door.

Frank tried to conceal his gun behind Milabel; but thirty yards from the bunkhouse, he saw one of the men dodge back into the room, and he knew he was recognized.

Milabel raised his voice. "Barney, put down that gun! That goes for all of you. Jess, roust out the whole crew. The first man that shoots will get shot himself, and that's a promise. Step outside here and line up!"

Slowly, the surly crew filed out facing Milabel. They were watching Frank, who had holstered his gun when he heard Milabel's orders. When the crew, twenty-six in all, were formed in a loose half circle around Milabel, he said, "Christian here wants to look at your spurs. Stand where you are and keep quiet."

Frank walked back of the men and went down the line examining each pair of spurs. Some of the men were in sock feet and some were not wearing spurs on their boots. No set of spurs, either in size or the elaboration of the silver work, resembled the rowel he had in his pocket.

When he was through, Milabel said, "All right, Christian. Step in the bunkhouse and keep an eye on the men. Now you boys go back and dump out your warbags in front of your bunks."

They went back and dumped their warbags and Frank went down the line. There were extra sets of spurs in some of the warbags; and once Frank knelt by one rider's boots to compare the rowels, but they were not the same.

Finished, Milabel said, "Anywhere else you want to look? Blacksmith shop, wagon shed, any of the buildings?"

"All of them," Frank said quietly.

Patiently, Milabel let him poke anywhere he pleased. He found some discarded and wornout spurs in the blacksmith shop, but still nothing that resembled his rowel. Gus had said the man was still wearing them. Nobody here was wearing the mate, that was certain.

When he was finished, he nodded to Milabel. "Thanks. As soon as I take a look at the guard I slipped past I'll be satisfied."

Milabel called for a horse and rode out with Frank to the rise behind the house where the guard was sitting by his horse. His spurs didn't match either.

Frank swung onto his horse again and Milabel said mildly, "I'm curious, Christian. It ain't any of my business, but do you aim to hogtie every man in the Nations to find out if he's got the mate to that rowel?"

"If I have to."

"Word'll get around and whoever has it will throw it away. Not to mention the fact that the whole damn army will be chasin' you in another day."

"There's just two outfits that can own it, Milabel," Frank said curtly. "You're one."

"Who's the other?"

Frank said thinly, "Never mind."

"It's Corb's, isn't it?"

Milabel swung into the saddle. "There's one sure way to pull you off my neck," Milabel said grimly. "That's to help you locate the spur. I'll ride to Corb's with you."

"And throw in with his crew when we get there?" Frank asked dryly. "No, thanks."

"You got two guns, I got none," Milabel pointed out. "I may be able to save you some trouble with Corb."

FRANK hesitated a long time, pondering his chances. If Corb's crew was there, they wouldn't be as docile as the Circle R crew. They'd fight. Now Corb and Milabel were partners of a sort, and it might be that Milabel could talk Corb into letting Frank look. It wouldn't hurt to try.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"All right," he said.

They arrived at Corb's place at dusk. The house seemed deserted, and Frank cautiously approached the place. They dismounted and he made Milabel keep between him and the house. Achieving the front door, which was open, they entered, and heard the soft snoring of a sleeping man.

Frank looked into the front room and saw a man sleeping at the table, his head lying on his folded arms, an overturned bottle of whiskey beside him. There was no other sound in the house.

Frank cursed softly, again remembering what Gus had said. Whoever owned the mended spur was wearing it. And Corb's crew was gone. He went over to the sleeping man and knelt beside him. The puncher was not wearing spurs. Frank looked up at Milabel.

"Tough luck," Milabel said. "You aim to wait till they ride in?"

"That's right. I'll look their stuff over now."

Frank went upstairs and turned into the first room he came to, the corner room. It held an old iron bed on which was a tangle of dirty blankets. Clothes were strewn over the floor, and on the deerskin rug was a pair of pants. Frank moved them aside with his toe, and under them was pair of boots. On the floor beside them were spurs.

Frank knelt and picked one up. As he examined the rowel, his heart almost missed a beat. The stamping on the big rowel was like the one in his pocket. With trembling fingers he rose and lighted the lamp and set it on the floor. He compared the two rowels carefully. They were identical.

He dropped the one spur and picked up its mate. The rowel on the mate was different!

He turned the spur over and examined the shank. And there, behind the fork, was the welded place where the plain rowel and shank had been joined!

He took the stairs two at a time, ran past Milabel in the hall and into the room where the puncher was sleeping. He kicked the man's chair out from under him, yanked him to his feet and slapped his face viciously.

The man roused and tried to shield his face with his arms and Frank slapped him again. Then he shoved the man to the door, into the hall and kicked him up the stairs.

The puncher, still three quarters drunk, yelled and cursed and fought. Frank kicked him onto the landing, then picked him up by the scruff of his neck and dragged him into the room and stood him on his feet.

He shoved the pair of spurs in front of his eyes and said, "Who owns these?"

Slowly, the puncher's eyes focused. "Them spurs?" he asked thickly.

"Yes."

"Where'd you find 'em?" the puncher asked uncertainly.

"Here. In this room."

"Must be Corb's," the puncher muttered. "He sleeps here."

"Where is he?"

"Reno."

Frank shoved the puncher toward the bed, ran past Milabel, who had come up stairs to watch, and took the stairs in two leaps. And Milabel, excitement in his eyes, was close on his heels.

LUVIE had scarcely succeeded in calming her father down after Otey left before there was a loud knock on her room door. She opened to find Edith standing there.

"Luvie, where's your Dad?"

"Here," Luvie said. "Where have you—"

Edith brushed past her and ran over to Barnes. "Come with me, Mr. Barnes. We've got to see the colonel and the soldiers won't let us. They're trying to keep Red off the grounds."

"But what's happened?"

"Get Major Corning and bring him out to the Darlington road," Edith said excitedly. "He'll come for you. Please hurry!"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Barnes, bewildered, nevertheless obeyed. He and Edith and Luvie hurried across the parade grounds to the administration building, where the lights were still burning. A sentry posted at the door of Major Corning's office tried to stop them, but Barnes shoved him aside and threw open the door. Major Corning was talking to an officer, and he reared up at sight of them.

Edith brushed past Barnes and hurried to his desk. "Major Corning, come with me at once, please!"

"But why—where—"

"If you want to stop this Indian trouble, come with me!"

Major Corning walked from behind his desk and followed Edith out of the room and outside, Luvie and Barnes trailing her. Edith led them around the building and out on the Darlington road. At the edge of the buildings there were two sentries, a lantern between them, standing in the middle of the road. Their rifles were leveled at Red, who stood with his hands on his hips holding the reins of two horses, his own and Edith's.

Major Corning slowed up at sight of him, exasperation showing in his face. He said, "Now what's this?"

"Listen careful," Red said in a low angry voice. "I ain't goin' to say it twice. Stone Bull, the old Cheyenne chief, has had the ringleaders of this uprisin' in his lodge since noon. He's been servin' 'em Scott Corb's trade whiskey that I stole out of a cache. Edith Fairing and me have been talkin' to them alongside of Stone Bull all afternoon tryin' to get 'em to change their minds. They were fightin' mad when the whiskey began to work, but they're all right now." He paused. "They're hog drunk and sleepin'. If you send a detail of soldiers with an ambulance to Stone Bull's lodge, you can freight the whole bunch of 'em over to the guardhouse here and your rebellion's over."

"Over?" Corning asked, his voice skeptical. "Do you think the arrest of a few will help us any?"

"Let me finish," Red said. "Stone Bull says if you send your wisest officer into camp with some soldiers to back him up and tell the Cheyenne and Arapaho that the government is increasing their beef ration and that you're holdin' a special beef issue tomorrow, there won't be any revolt. Them Indians are starvin', Major! Arrest the leaders and feed the rest and your trouble is over!"

Major Corning was silent a long moment, staring at Red in the lantern light. "If I thought I could believe you, I'd—"

"Don't believe me!" Red yelled angrily. "Believe her!" He pointed to Edith. "She's been sittin' in a lodge all day while them drunken Cheyennes threatened her with scalpin' and torture and everything else! She's the one to believe! Ask her!"

Major Corning wheeled to face Edith.

"Do it, Major Corning!" Edith said swiftly. "Believe me, I know those people! I know that Stone Bull and the others want peace and that once the ringleaders —Corb's Indians—are arrested, the trouble will be over. Arrest those leaders, promise the others food, and keep your word! The uprising will be over then!"

Major Corning stared at her tense, beautiful face, and then, forgetting all dignity, he wheeled and yelled to the officer watching them from a window of the administration building: "Brett, have assembly sounded! No, wait a minute!" And he turned and ran, major or no major.

And even as he was running, there came the sound of gunfire from the sutler's bar.

CHAPTER XXVI

BLACKOUT FOR ONE

THEY were in sight of the sentries, soon to be challenged, when Milabel said again to Frank, "Sure you want to do this Christian? You've got a price on your head, you've escaped, you've—"

Frank said quietly, "Get me past the sentries; I'll worry about the rest of it."

Milabel grunted. They pulled up at the sentry's challenge, "Who goes there?"

"Chet Milabel, from the Circle R. This is one of my men."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"All right, Milabel. Leave your horse with the troopers at the corral."

They passed through the line and rode over to the corral behind the stable, where, in the darkness, they turned their horses over to a trooper who said, "You two didn't get in none too soon."

They walked through the long driveway of the stable and came out into the wagon yard. This, Frank remembered, was where he got his welcome to Ft. Reno. That was from Corb too, he supposed.

Passing the office they heard a scuffling back in the darkness of the wagon shed. Milabel glanced that way, but Frank stalked on. Suddenly someone yelled, "Frank!"

It was Otey's voice. Frank stopped and turned. Otey called, "Wait a minute!" There was a loud, sickening thud, the sound of thinly padded bone on flesh, followed by the sound of a body hitting the ground. A moment later, Otey walked out of the darkness. His nose was bloody and there was a cut over his eye, and his knuckles were raw, but he seemed oblivious to that. He came up to Frank, looking around him, strapping on his gunbelt.

"Great Lord, get out of sight!"

Frank said, "Is Corb in the post?"

"You damn fool, there's two-three hundred men here with orders to kill you on sight!"

Frank wheeled and started walking toward the compound gate. Otey ran after him and grabbed him by the arm. "Frank, what is it?" he asked in a calm voice.

"Corb killed Morg, Otey. I found that spur, like Gus said. I found the mate to it and the mended one by Corb's bed out at his place."

Otey's hand came away from Frank's arm. "He's in the saloon, Frank. Just play it careful, and I'll back you."

Milabel, at the gate, said, "Here's where I drop out."

Otey said, "You better stay out, too."

Frank said nothing. He mounted the porch and walked down the long length of it, his goal the saloon. At the window, he hauled up and looked inside. The bar was less crowded now; but in the far corner, away from the window and in the angle made by the end of the bar, Corb still sat at his card game, his back to the wall, his face to the window.

Frank sized it up, and knew he couldn't get ten feet past the doorsill before he was gunned. He said to Otey, "You cover 'em from the door, Otey."

He walked down to the end of the window, picked up a chair, raised it over his head and crashed it through the window in one great downraking sweep.

At the same time Otey lunged through through the door and yelled: "Don't nobody move!"

And then Frank stepped through the hole in the window, a gun hanging in his hand, and the room fell silent.

Corb half raised out of his seat at sight of Frank, his eyes wild, then settled slowly back into his chair.

Frank said, "Corb, stand up!" and his voice cut the silence like a whip.

After a long pause, Corb came to his feet beside the angle of the bar.

"Walk out of that corner and come out through the door onto the porch. And when you hit the porch, cut loose your dogs because I know you killed Morg."

Corb hesitated for one moment, took a step from behind the table, and when he was even with the bar he suddenly dived behind its shelter.

Frank swung up his gun, and then saw he couldn't shoot for the drinkers lining the bar. He lunged through the crowd, flinging men aside, and swung into the space behind the bar just in time to see Corb duck into the door to the dark store beyond the other end of the bar.

He ran bown behind the bar, knocking the bartender against the back bar, and dived into the dark door of the store beyond, just as Otey let his gun off at the ceiling and yelled: "Everybody stay put!"

CORB'S gun bellowed out and a slug slapped into the doorframe beside Frank. He moved over into the deep dark-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ness of the store and across the tables lined with goods he flipped two shots at Corb.

He vaulted a table, saw a form move across the store again, and shot once more. He had cut Corb off from retreating into the darker rear of the store. Now he had him between himself and the street lamps out on the parade ground which glowed through the windows.

Frank saw something move up ahead and he shot again, and heard the hammering of Corb's feet as he ran. Suddenly, a bolt of dress goods soared toward the window, it jangled outward onto the porch; and then Corb, half crouching, dived through the hole in the window.

He was running for the edge of the porch just as Red, attracted by the shot, came pounding across the parade grounds, saw him by the aid of the street lamp and flipped two shots at him. Frank threw two more through the window, and more glass jangled.

For a split second Corb hesitated, then he ran down the porch. Frank vaulted through the broken window in time to see him duck into the stairway that raised to the hotel rooms on the second floor.

Frank took after him, and swung into the stairwell. Up at the top Corb's form was just vanishing. Frank took the stairs three at a time; Red swung in behind him and Luvie, her skirts lifted, swung in behind Red.

Red yelled: "Careful comin' up the top, Frank!"

Frank hit the top step and tripped and sprawled, just as Corb's gun cut loose from down the corridor. Frank threw a shot. Corb ducked back into the L of the corridor and Frank raced after him, listening to the distant pounding of Corb's feet.

Red hit the stair landing pulling a gun, and wheeled just in time to jab it into Luvie. Red's mouth opened, then he grabbed her and pulled her out of sight just as the first of the bar room crowd, whom Otey could not hold any longer, hit the stairwell below. Red shot down it twice, and then heard the curses of the men below drifting up the stairwell. One man shouted: "The back stairs! He can't guard both!"

Luvie heard and she said, "Quick, Red! Give me a gun!"

"But you're a woman! You can't—"

"I can fight for him, can't I?" Luvie flashed. "I tried to get him killed once! Oh, Red, give me a chance to make up for it!"

Red palmed up his second gun, gave it to Luvie, and with sinking heart watched her run down the corridor toward the back stairs. His courage forsook him. Suppose something happened to her! He didn't have time to think of that long, for the second wave of pursuers—soldiers this time—hit the stairs. He laid a blistering fire down on them.

When Frank rounded the corner of the dark corridor, he saw only a bracket wall lamp turned down low ahead of him. He lifted his gun and shot it out, and then he stopped. He couldn't hear Corb, and could see the window in the end of the corridor ahead of him framing a segment of the lighter night sky. Had Corb gone into a room?

Even while he was watching, listening to a woman run down the corridor behind him, he saw a ladder drop down across the window and the form of Corb climbing it.

HE SHOT once, heard a bitter oath, and then ran for the ladder. As he reached it he saw it being pulled up by a rope from the roof, and he leaped for it. His hands caught the bottom rung and his weight suddenly broke Corb's hold on the rope. The ladder crashed to the floor and Frank with it. He hit the floor and rolled, just as Corb shot down into the corridor. Frank palmed up his other gun and sent three fast shots at the trap-door hole, then came to his feet and climbed the ladder, shooting his gun empty.

He didn't know whether or not Corb was waiting up there to get him, but he

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had to take the chance. He raced up the ladder, hurled himself through the square hole and fell on the roof, rolling over and over down its slope. A fusillade of shots seemed to follow his course until he was bought up against a chimney.

He rolled behind it, then feverishly started to reload his guns, peering out from behind the chimney. He saw another chimney beyond the trapdoor, and this was where Corb was forted up.

Frank swung his loading gates shut, and then heard the shooting below. Some of it came from the front stairway and some seemed to be coming from the back part of the hotel. In a few moments they would be up after him. He peered out from behind the chimney and took stock of the situation. Then he called "Here I come, Corb."

No answer.

The roof was almost flat, sloping toward the rear, and Corb was upslope from him. Again, as in the store, there was the light behind Corb, and darkness behind him. Corb couldn't see him well, and Frank decided to take the chance. He broke out from behind the chimney, quartering away from Corb, holding his fire and running. Corb opened up, but he was shooting blindly toward the chimney. Frank ran to one side until he saw Corb's figure crouched behind the chimney, and then he opened up with both guns.

Frank slid back.

Corb grunted and came to his feet, and Frank knew he was hit. Then Corb, firing as he ran, headed up the roof in a panic to get away from Frank. He was limping, bent over so low that he was behind the dark line of the wooden parapet at the front of the building, and Frank could not see him.

He ran anyway, shooting blindly at the noise Corb's dragging feet made. And then the noise ceased, and Frank could see nothing. He dropped on his belly and started crawling up the slope, a gun in each hand. Corb was hiding somewhere behind the parapet, Frank knew.

Suddenly, something loomed up in front of Frank. It was a low brick ventilator. Then, confident of his shelter, Frank opened up. He trained his gun in a line with the parapet and spacing his shots he opened up in a sustained roar of gunfire.

The night silence exploded into a staccato of explosions.

Suddenly, there was a scream, and Frank saw Corb's body rise up full height, clutching his chest. Frank shot then, blindly and furiously; and he saw Corb driven back until his back, acting as a pivot, bent over the parapet. Then slowly, almost gracefully, he toppled over and disappeared.

Frank was sweating—cold, chill sweat—and his hand shook.

Frank rose and ran the ten yards to the parapet. Before he reached it he heard a great rending crash of splitting wood. When he got to the parapet, he looked over. He saw, a story and a half below him, a jagged hole in the boards of the wooden awning; and he straightened up, a little sick, just as a soldier's voice called from the trap door: "Raise 'em high, cowboy, or you're dead!"

CHAPTER XXVII

I SAW JUSTICE

FRANK was marched down stairs between a squad of soldiers to the porch. Someone already had thrown a canvas over Corb's broken body and Major Corning, surrounded by his officers, was standing under the street lamp. Red, surly and disarmed, and Luvie and Edith and Otey, his gun rammed in the back of two of Corb's men, were waiting with Major Corning.

Frank just looked at him with eyes that expected—nothing.

Frank walked wearily over to them, and Major Corning said grimly, "This time you won't escape, Christian."

It brought a laugh from the crowd gathered behind the soldiers who ringed the group.

"Escape?" Luvie said indignantly.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Why should he? He's not guilty of anything."

Major Corning turned to her. "For a lady who held off my troopers with ten minutes of gunfire, you haven't exactly the right to speak."

"Then I have," a voice said from the crowd. Chet Milabel shouldered his way through the soldiers. "I'm askin' why he should be arrested."

"You just saw a murder!" Major Corning said indignantly.

"Like hell I did," Milabel said roughly. "I saw justice. Corb killed this man's partner. He's got the proof if you'll listen to him."

The major pushed his palms down against the table; his eyes were dark and snapping.

"I'll listen," the major said, turning to Frank. "What proof have you that Corb killed Wheelon?"

Frank wearily produced the pair of spurs and the rowel and told his story briefly. Milabel backed him up. Luvie and Red and Otey and Barnes, who had drawn closer now, verified the story Gus had told at the camp. At the storm of talk that poured from them all, Major Corning raised his hands to his ears.

Like a flight of maddened, maddening bees they were.

"All right, all right!" he said angrily. "Perhaps that's so. Still, there's a dead-or-alive reward on Christian's head for murdering a trail driver of Milabel's. And you preferred the charges yourself, along with Corb!" he said to Milabel.

Otey said harshly, "Red, take this gun and keep these two jaspers here! Major, keep your mouth shut good and proper until I get back!"

The major glared, but Otey vanished into the night. In two minutes, he led a staggering Beach Freeman out of the compound into the circle of lamp light. Beach's face was a bloody pulp, and Otey had to hold him upright.

Otey stood him up in front of Major Corning and said, "Beach, who killed that rider of Milabel's at the stampede? Talk straight, or you'll get more of what you've already got."

Beach stared at him fearfully from bleary, bloodshot eyes.

"I did," Beach whined through puffed lips. "It—it was a mistake," he said weakly. "I had to."

"And I fired him for it," Frank said angrily to the major.

Milabel looked over at Frank. "I'm glad to hear that," he said softly. "Damned if I ever thought you did it." He looked at Major Corning. "What else have you got against him, Major?"

Major Corning's voice was sharp with anger. "What else? I understand from talk around here that Christian killed four of Corb's riders in a night attack."

Red raised his foot and savagely kicked the two Corb understrappers before the Major. "You gents aim to talk, or will I turn you over to the Major as whiskey peddlers?" Red drawled. "Gus told me your caches. I know every one of 'em."

He scowled mightily.

One rider glared at Red, then said sullenly to the major, "I was on that raid. Corb raided Christian, not the other way. We got what we had comin' to us, I reckon."

Major Corning's mouth was agape. He looked at his officers, and they could only look at him mutely.

Frank said calmly, "What else is in the list, Major?"

"Escaping from our soldiers," Major Corning stammered.

"Stone Bull rescued him," Edith put in. "Take it up with him. Frank had nothing to do with it."

A captain spoke up. "There's a little matter of whisky peddling, Major. That was the cause of the original arrest."

"And I framed it on Christian," Milabel countered bluntly. "I stole the whiskey from Corb's cache and planted it on Frank's range."

He looked around, almost proudly.

Major Corning said furiously, "For a man who has been feuding with Christian ever since he got here, you seem mighty

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

interested in having him set free, Milabel!"

"I am," Milabel said, his broad face cracking into a grin. "He's made me eat every word I ever bragged. I want him for a neighbor."

"Still, he broke jail," the captain put in.

"But it was a false charge," Frank countered.

Luvie walked up to Major Corning and faced him. "Major Corning, you've had the biggest menace on this reservation wiped out tonight. The biggest whisky peddler, a renegade Indian leader, and a cattle rustler. And you want the man jailed who did it. That may sound like the U. S. Army to some people, but it's not my army. Is it yours?"

Major Corning looked searchingly at her, and then he said gently, "No, my dear, it's not. But argument can bring out lots besides tears. Tonight, it's brought out the truth." He walked over to Frank and put out his hand. "You're free as air, as far as I'm concerned, son. All I'll burden you with is my heartfelt thanks."

He almost smiled.

Frank took his hand and a slow smile broke over his tired face. Before he had time to thank the major, a cavalry officer rode up and the crowd broke for him. He saluted and said, "All the leaders are in the guardhouse, Major, and Captain Brett has returned safely from the Indian camp."

"Is it over?" Major Corning asked.

The officer smiled faintly. "I don't know, sir, but the drums have stopped beating."

MAJOR CORNING looked at Red, the walked over to him. He put out his hand again, and he said, "It's a pity you aren't an Army man, Shibe. You could use a little discipline—but that's all you could use. Thanks for what you've done. And in case there's any doubt about it, you have the run of this garrison from now to eternity, with a standing invitation to eat in the officer's mess as long as I'm in command."

Red grinned awkwardly.

The mayor's stony expression looked as if it was frozen on until Doomsday.

He saluted Edith and Luvie and marched off across the parade ground, and his officers behind him. The troops were ordered to fall in and marched off, and slowly the crowd broke up.

Red found Edith standing beside him. "It kind of pays off for Morg's murder, don't it?" he murmured.

Edith nodded, and a shadow crossed her face. But only for a moment, and then she smiled at Red. "Morg was lucky to have the friends he had, Red."

"Frank will do to ride the river with," Red said gently.

Edith looked up at him. "He will. But Morg had another friend that will do to ride the river with, too."

Red looked down at her, and his freckled face was suddenly close to the color of his hair. "I ain't ever been tagged with that," he stammered.

Edith smiled a little and put her hand through his arm. "Then maybe you'd better get used to it, Red, because I think so."

Luvie watched Frank put the spurs in his hip pocket, and wipe his forehead, and then she turned to her father. "Come on, Dad," she said miserably.

She put a hand through her father's arm and they started for the hotel.

She heard footsteps behind her, and Frank swung in alongside them.

She did not speak.

"You think you'd trust Luvie to walk around the parade grounds with me, Mr. Barnes?" he asked quietly.

Barnes laughed and said, "Let her answer that, Frank."

"Good night, Dad," Luvie murmured.

She and Frank started out across the parade grounds, heading instinctively for a spot where the street lamps were not so bright.

Frank didn't say anything for a long time, until they were in the shaded street where the married officers' quarters were.

Suddenly he said, "Major Corning said

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

somethin' there tonight I didn't rightly understand."

"What was that?"

"He said you held off the troopers with a gun." He looked sideways at her. "Did you?"

"Yes," Luvie said softly.

"But—why?"

"I owed it to you," Luvie said, and then her voice was gentle with quiet pride. "You didn't believe me when I said I was sorry, Frank. I—I had to show you the only way I could."

Frank didn't speak for a moment, and then he said, "I reckon I see," and there was disappointment in his voice.

"No, you don't Frank," Luvie said. They stopped, and faced each other. "Frank, are you going to make me say it?"

"Wait a minute, Luvie," Frank said huskily. "I'm takin' a chance on what you mean, and I'm goin' to say it. You've been my woman ever since I saw you, fightin' or no fightin', and you can go away and I'll never see you again and you'll still be my woman. Mine! Do you understand?"

"Understand?" Luvie echoed. She laughed shakily. "It's what I've known before you knew it, Frank."

And Frank took her in his arms and held her close to him, knowing they had both been fools and a little glad of it and not caring.

When, hand in hand, they came back to the hotel much later, Otey and Milabel were seated on the porch steps under the light.

At their approach, Otey said truculently, "Frank, make this damn jughead see sense. We can't put out no five men on a roundup wagon to separate our herds!"

Milabel laughed and said, "Listen, runt. You can if I loan you the five men, can't you?"

THE END

EXTRA!

ERLE STANLEY GARDNER'S

world popular detective story character

LESTER LEITH

returns to the pages of

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

in a thrilling new fast-paced mystery!

SEPTEMBER 16th ISSUE ON SALE SEPTEMBER 6th

at all leading newsstands . . . 10c

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THIS seems pretty likely to be Give-Thought-to-the-Authors Week in this column. Aside from communications from two regular contributors, there are some New Faces to be taken care of. (This week: three—count 'em, three—ARGOSY débuts. And that ought to hold the cynics who claimed we didn't mean it when we said we welcomed stories by new authors.)

First, though, Robert Carse has a few words to say about the background for his novelet, "Puritan's Progress."

ROBERT CARSE

Most of the characters in my story, and most of the action, are based in history. Le Vasseur was in reality an officer of the French colonial forces who took Tortuga for the French. He betrayed his flag some little time after becoming Governor, and set himself up as the "Prince of Tortuga" with a lot of renegades as his followers. His fade-out scene was much as described: He was killed on Tortuga finally, and his buccaneers were polished off by a French force sent out by Governor-General de Poincy, and commanded by the *Chevalier* Fontenay.

In the year 1641, a shipload of Puritans, not content with conditions in the Massachusetts Colony, came South to attempt to colonize the island of Providencia, which, for your geography, is one hundred and sixty miles due East of the Nicaraguan coast. The Spanish held Providencia; the Puritans were attacked as they attempted to land, and a great lot of them were killed.

The survivors then found their own salvation in the islands as best they could. Those were tough times, and tough lads.
N. Y. City

NEXT comes Charles Tenney Jackson, creator of that inimitable oaf of the Everglades, Mase McKay. Mr. Jackson encloses a fan letter that he's rather proud of, and we don't blame him. Go ahead, Florida.

CHARLES T. JACKSON

A letter was recently forwarded me from Dr. George MacDonnell, the Miami City Health Director. Never met the gentleman but I have heard of his cruises and natural-wild life and biological interests in Florida wilds. Will look him up as he lives a few blocks from me, I discover. He writes:

"Dear Mr. Jackson: I am writing to tell you how much I enjoyed the Florida story, 'Sharks For Breakfast,' and hope you will have more like it in ARGOSY. I am a steadfast reader of ARGOSY.

". . . Your characters drawn from the ones you meet down there are very well portrayed. One thing I was struck with was your close acquaintance with Florida scenes, especially along the Keys.

"I am going shortly on a trip down among the Keys in which we hope to find one or more octopi for the Marineland Museum. That trip possibly will furnish the basis for a story."

Well, I must look into this thing; but no octopi. Mase McKay will call them octopusses, or there ain't goin' to be no fun.
Florida

Intelligence Department:

"Señor Sleight-of-Hand" is the first—but definitely not the last—story by Richard Blaker to appear in these pages. The author of last year's highly successful novel, "Here Lies a Most Beautiful Lady," was born in India in 1893. For four generations Blaker scions have followed political or military careers in India. But Mr. Blaker, after wartime service in the Royal Field Artillery in France and Egypt, preferred the pen.

Temporarily ensconced in what is surely not a neo-Sevillian nest in California, Mr. Blaker still thinks of Hertfordshire as his home. There he has a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

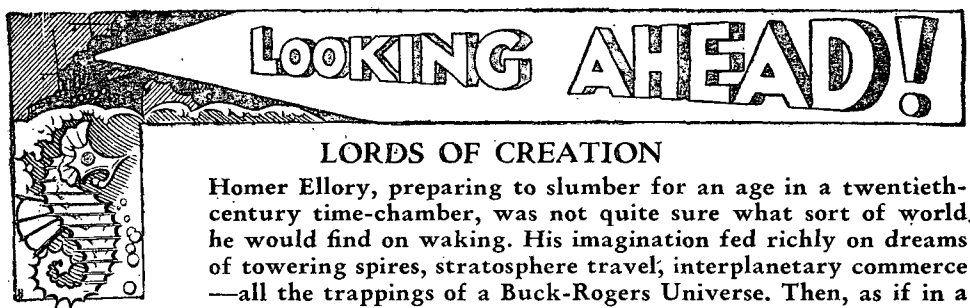
sixteenth-century cottage which, of all things, "was originally two cottages, one belonging to the plowman and the other to the cowman. My study was once the cowshed."

However the Blakers have managed to instill the modern note into this Olde Englishe Pastorale by putting in central heating (vaguely resembling the American device called the furnace) and an ice box. By an old charter, Mr. Blaker is permitted, as occupant of the cottage, to graze one donkey, one goose, and half a cow on the village green. Probably stumped by the problem of which half of a cow to graze, or of how, indeed, to come upon half a cow at all, Mr. Blaker shrewdly sold his grazing rights to a local farmer. Price: five shillings.

Our second new author, George Masselman, is a Hollander by birth, and a pretty rugged fellow, six feet four inches vertically, and 204 pounds ringside. He was a mate on Dutch ships during the war—and when the Allies began commandeering neutral ships, Mr. Masselman found himself surprisingly serving under the Stars and Stripes.

After the war he just followed the flag back to this country, wanting to do nothing but write. So he was sent to Java by an American firm to manage a factory. Still wanting to write, he came back home and started an importing business, which flourished. Now he is writing, at last, and this time he's going to stick to it.

John Wiggin, the third literary Brenda Frazier, was born in India, too. (Isn't anybody ever born in this country any more?) Graduating from Stanford, he decided to become the world's greatest composer. This did not work out. So he took to radio and the tall woods of the advertising game. He just sort of began writing stories, and publishers (like us) just sort of began buying them.



LORDS OF CREATION

Homer Ellory, preparing to slumber for an age in a twentieth-century time-chamber, was not quite sure what sort of world he would find on waking. His imagination fed richly on dreams of towering spires, stratosphere travel, interplanetary commerce—all the trappings of a Buck-Rogers Universe. Then, as if in a second, it was the Year 5000 A.D., and Ellory took his first step into the Day after Tomorrow. What he saw stunned him. He was plunged into a world without metal, a second Stone Age. So Ellory rolled up his sleeve and began to create Civilization anew. . . . Beginning a great new novel of fantasy and adventure, by

EANDO BINDER

SPURS FOR SACATONE

The Company had ruled the grazeland for years—the Company was bread and meat and breath of life to every living thing in the Valley. But the Company, it turned out, could be as wrong and cruel as it was remote. So a Company man forgot twenty years of loyalty and started to set things right. A complete, absorbing novelet, of the West that really was, by

BENNETT FOSTER

ALSO FINE FICTION by PHILIP KETCHUM, RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS, DONALD BARR CHIDSEY, THEODORE ROSCOE, and many others.

COMING IN NEXT WEEK'S ARGOSY—SEPTEMBER 23RD

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Voyage into the Unusual!

Travel with the famous authors of scientifiction into new worlds of the unusual . . . the weird . . . the different . . . the eerie . . . the astounding . . . the supernatural—Explore space . . . visit unknown worlds . . . meet fantastic beings.

You can do all this by reading the marvelous imaginative stories in **Famous Fantastic Mysteries** . . . . stories you have longed to read . . . . written by these popular masters of the mythical——

MERRITT . . . WELLMAN . . . LEATH . . . CUMMINGS . . .
WANDREI . . . GEISY . . . ROBBINS . . .

We have gathered these tales together for the first time, and have placed them for your enjoyment in this, the most amazing magazine on the newsstands. Get your copy today, before your dealer is "sold out"!

Famous FANTASTIC Mysteries

Now on sale at all leading newsstands . . . 15¢

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IT'S A DATE... *with* Chesterfield

... the cigarette that's different from all others

It's the RIGHT COMBINATION of mild, ripe, home-grown and aromatic Turkish tobaccos .. the world's best .. that makes Chesterfield the milder and better-tasting cigarette ..

A HAPPY COMBINATION for MORE SMOKING PLEASURE

Copyright 1939, LIGGETT & MYERS TOBACCO CO.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED